

DEEDS of DARING



DONE by GIRLS

N. HUDSON MOORE



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DEEDS OF DARING
DONE BY GIRLS



"SEE, CLEMENCE, A GOOD OMEN. LOOK AT THE NEW MOON."
—Page 153.

Moore, Mrs. Hannah (Hudson)

DEEDS *of* DARING DONE BY GIRLS

BY N. HUDSON MOORE

AUTHOR OF "CHILDREN OF OTHER DAYS," "THE OLD
CHINA BOOK," "THE OLD FURNITURE BOOK," "THE
LACE BOOK," "OLD PEWTER, BRASS, COPPER, AND
SHEFFIELD PLATE," "THE COLLECTOR'S MANUAL," ETC.

With Illustrations in Colour

BY ARCHIE GUNN



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AN OPEN LETTER

DO NOT THINK, DEAR GIRLS, that because you are girls you may not have as much courage as your brothers. I believe that quite as stout hearts beat beneath muslin frocks as under stuff jackets. When you have finished reading this book about your sisters, perhaps—if you do not already—you will agree with me, and think that it needs only occasion to call out the necessary courage. I have been asked which one of these heroines I think the most daring, but—oh dear—it would never do to have a favourite, would it? So I leave them to you, and that you will enjoy learning of their trials and triumphs is the wish of your friend,

THE AUTHOR.

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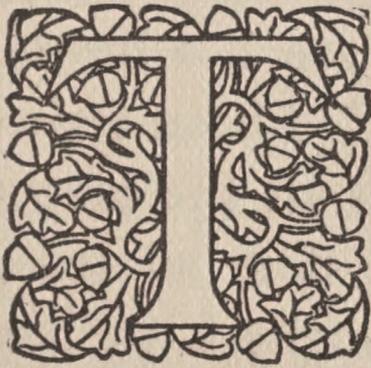
DEEDS OF DARING
DONE BY GIRLS



THE ROBE OF THE DUCHESS

*As told by Jehan, her Page
in the Year of Grace 1392*

I



IS NOT SO," QUOTH she, "and you know it"; and with that she fetched me a buffet on the ear.

Now, when the other pages saw me bested like that by a damsel, even though she were my Lady, they roared and girded at me so loud that I liked to have choked with rage.

I ran forward a step; but she cried out, —

"An you touch me I'll have you whipped, sir"; and, truth, she would,

which well I knew, for I'd felt ere this old Raoul's whip curling about my shoulders, all on her charges too. But that was some years since. 'T was this wise that the present pother came about.

Of a joyous afternoon in May, my Lady Eleonore took it into her head to go into the court to see her hawk. For these many months I'd been training of it for her, and in all the mews there was not another flew so true, aimed so swift, and brought back her quarry so little torn.

My Lady knew right well that the hawk was for her, but she knew not that I thought to give it her on her fête day, which fell on the morrow. The bird was in fine feather, not a pinion ruffed, her russet colour showing redly in the sun,—it was a Barberry bird,—and a new hood of fine

leather on her head. On her feet, fastened by bewits of deer's hide, hung two Milan bells of gold,—the one, as is ever the way with choicest bells, a semi-tone below the other. These bells I had begged from Comte Gaston, who gave willingly enough when he knew that they were to pleasure my Lady.

Now 't was not my purpose that she should see the bird till next day, but womenfolk ever contrive to mix matters up. I thought but to stay her, to keep her jesting for a while; but her anger rose and was greater than I knew.

She was down in the broad hall on her way to the mews, and I following behind, before my wits, which work ever a thought slow, had conjured up something to say.

“Pray, mistress,” saith I, “how old

be you to-morrow? Let me think, will it be all of eleven years?"

To tell truth, I knew her years as well as she. It was nine years since my Lady's mother, Dame Eleonore of Comminges, had brought and left her daughter with my Lord, Gaston Phoebus, Comte de Foix.

Comte Gaston was my Lady's cousin, and poor Dame Eleonore, her mother, fleeing from a cruel husband, knew not where to place the child, so sought advice from Comte Gaston, a powerful and great lord.

"Leave her with me," saith my Lord, who had taken a fancy to my little Lady, then but a child of three. She was the first bright thing that had come to the old castle of Orthez, which was but a gloomy tower since in a rage my Lord Gaston had slain his only son, and driven forth to her

own people his wife, the Princess Agnes.

Canst thou wonder that we all loved the child?

None knew nor loved her better than I, being that my Lord Gaston gave me to be her page and playfellow, since there were but scullery maids and some rude wenches in the castle since the Princess Agnes went forth. So who should doubt but that I should know my Lady's age? Besides this I was but four years older come Hallowe'en.

Being well grown and tall, she was ever tender on the subject of her years. By my Lord's command, she had been taught to play on the lute, she could walk a measure, hunt and hawk, and since the new tirewoman had come, there had been much bravery of apparel. So 't was but to tease her and

keep her from the mews that I put forth, —

“ All of eleven years ? ”

“ ’Tis not so, and you know it,” quoth she, and then came the buffet.

I choked down my rage, and turning to those that mocked me, thought to bring the laugh on her.

“ Varlets,” cried I, “ my Lady Eleonore is no longer a child, she chooses you to know. Twelve years old will she be to-morrow, but two years younger than our new Queen Isabeau. And who knows what brave suitor comes to woo ? ”

At this they all laughed again, as in truth I hoped they would. With a black look at me and a stamp of her foot, my Lady turns and goes up the stair. This pleased me well, since the hawk was forgotten.

“ Wit ye well, ye shall suffer for

this," sneered one of the pages, between whom and me there was ever discord. "Your mistress wilt have you soundly swunged, and well I pray my Lord will do it himself."

My skin was pricking somewhat at the thought, but it behoved me to show no signs of it; so I looked him in the eye and flung back,—

"If my Lord so much as cuffs me, thou mayst do it also"; and with that I strolled to the mews.

I stroked the hawk, and thought how pleased my Lady would be on the morrow to have her and fly her too, since, to pleasure my Lady, my Lord had passed his word that we all should fly a cast with him on the broad marches that lay to the west a league or more.

Long ere cockcrow the next day was I astir. 'T was a bright day

for me, since my Lord had given me a new livery. For the first time I cast away my leathern doublet and put on one of soft cloth, and drew on a brave pair of chausses, a red one on the right leg and a green one on the left, and tied the points to my doublet.

It needed but only a sword to make me a man!

As I stole down the stair, I crept into the great hall to take one look into the great mirror of purest crystal which had but lately come to my Lord from a land far over seas, called Venice.

What I saw therein causeth me to turn hot, since never thought I to look so fine. Clapping my cap on my head, I ran to the mews, to bathe the feet of the hawk in fair water, to settle her bells and jesses, and to see that the hood could be quickly cast aside. Soon

I heard the bustle in the courtyard, and hurried thither with the hawk on hand.

My faith, but it was a joyous sight!

There on the highest step stood my Lord and beside him my mistress Eleonore. My Lord was smiling at her, and well he might, she stood beside him so straight and tall. She was in a gown of green, made of Florence cloth, and on her head was a cap bound with many chains of gold, which, she telleth me later, came from the same far-away country as the mirror, — Venice. In their midst was set a stone big as a throstle's egg and blue as the sky. On her hips hung a girdle of gold set close with little stones of this same sky-blue.

All this I saw as I walked from the court's end. Coming up the steps, said I in my bravest fashion, —

“Mistress Eleonore, here is the hawk I trained for thee”; and I set the Barbary bird upon her wrist.

“Now, Jehan, I forgive thee,” saith she, “and trust thou’lt bear in mind that I be twelve years, not eleven. My Lord and cousin hath a gift for thee also, and telleth me to give it thee now.”

With that she hands me out a sword, — a brave, bright sword!

And my Lord says kindly, —

“Have it ever ready in her service, Jehan; she is a lonely maid.”

I bent and kissed my Lady’s hand, and saith with my heart in my mouth,

“My Lord, I’ll e’en follow her to the world’s end.”

“Thou art a good lad, and I trust thee”; and as he spoke, my Lord smiled.

True, as I swore fealty to my Lady,

I little recked how soon 't would be before I rode away behind her!

Just then the huntsman wound his horn, and we all rode out over the drawbridge and away into the bright sun and green fields a-hawking. We made a merry day of it. The hounds sped before, starting up many a creature that fled affrighted from us.

My Lady rode, not her own palfrey, which was a gentle animal but of little speed, but a chestnut mare, one specially cherished by Comte Gaston, even though she was a thought too light for his bulk.

For many a day the mare had been but exercised about the court, and being a high-mettled creature, soon grew fretted by the flapping of my Lady's habit, — a thing to which she was ill-used.

We were pricking along at a good

pace, my Lady having her hands full with holding down the mare, when suddenly from the grass at her very feet darted out a fallow deer, a little thing scarcely more than a month old. The mare started, threw up her head, and ere I knew what had befallen, had wheeled about and started off like the wind.

“Jehan,” I heard my Lady call; and turning my own horse about, I spurred him after the flying mare. On we sped; the others, passing through a copse, had missed seeing our plight.

“Hold fast, mistress,” shouted I, while I strove with whip and spur to get beside her.

Little by little we crept forward, my horse and I, and after that day I ever forbore to call him a poor thing. First his nose pressed the mare's thigh, and then he came up with the saddle-

cloth, and then a bit ahead of that, till I called,—

“Loose your foot from the stirrup, mistress.”

Even as I spoke I could see that she did it.

“Lean towards me and drop the reins, mistress”; and as I spoke I switched my poor nag and leaned from the saddle, took my mistress about the waist, and pulled her clear of the mare. It took but a moment more to set her gently on the ground and start after the mare, since I knew, if aught befell her, our day of pleasuring would have but an ill ending. Freed from the flapping of the skirt, she gradually slackened her pace, and ere long I was leading her back to where my Lady stood with the tall marsh grasses waving about her feet.

“Help me to mount, Jehan,” saith

she, whilst I was turning about in my mind how to urge her to let me ride the mare while she took the steadier horse.

“Pray, mistress,” I began; but she cut me short with, —

“Have a care that my cousin knows not of this mishap, since it fairly shames me to think how the mare bested me. But I was not affrighted.”

At this she gave a side look at me, but I knew her too well to show that I had noted her white face. I did not answer, but pondered if it was not seemlier to guard my mistress even against herself. When she noted me standing and switching of the grass, she crieth out, —

“Sure, Jehan, it would be an unkind part to tell that I was like to be run with on my fête day, since all has come out well. Promise now that thou wilt hold thy peace.”

So promise I did, and none guessed how near we had come to grief, though my Lord, when we drew up with them, wondered why the mare looked so hard ridden!

'T was now well on to noon, and we rested by the side of a clear stream, and ate of squirrels fresh roasted, and of little fishes drawn from the brook but half an hour before, and of the honey of the wild bee spread on cakes of white flour, and of spices and of wine.

“Hast had a happy day, little one?” saith my Lord, as we sat 'neath the trees; and my mistress, turning, laid her cheek on his hand and said,—

“Dear Cousin, never can I thank thee enough for all that thou hast done for me”; and the tears like to have fallen.

“To see thee happy gives me all the thanks I crave”; and my Lord fetched

a deep sigh, thinking belike of that son whom his own hand had slain.

Then, when the sun grew low, homeward we turned, the pages singing as we rode along, —

“White as a lily, more ruddy than the rose,
Brilliant as a ruby that with spark of fire glows,
Your beauty and your loveliness to me all peerless
shows,
White as a lily, more ruddy than the rose.
My heart for your heart watches ; it pleaseth me
to know
That to all other lovers the law of love I show.
White as a lily, more ruddy than the rose,
Brilliant as a ruby that with spark of fire glows.”

II

WHEN we came in sight of the castle of Orthez, there rose from the great chimneys a dark cloud of smoke. The drawbridge fell, and the steward rode forth to meet us.

“Lo, my Lord,” he cried, “hasten home. Whilst thou wert absent here hath come a great lord, the Duc de Berry, with messages from the King.”

“Hath he a great following?” questioned my Lord.

“Seventy lances and thirty sumpter mules. They are cared for, my Lord, and all have supped.”

We hurried forward. As my Lord rode into the court, the Duc de Berry cometh through the door to meet him. He was elder than my Lord, and was uncle to King Charles, and a powerful and noble lord. Never had I looked on one so great as he. All France hath heard how he taxed his people and gathered from them great stores of money that he might have gold to buy palaces, that he might get from strange and foreign countries noble pictures

with which to deck his walls, and tapestries wrought in coloured threads and gold. Not only these things did he buy, but books enriched with jewels and filled with images of saints and others, coloured with blue, red, and gold. After him rode hundreds of followers when he went to war or travelled abroad in strange countries.

As one looked upon him, his face seemeth harsh at first, yet a smile became it well, and he smiled when he looked on my mistress, as doth everyone who seeth her.

One, two, three days he tarried. 'T was said that his matters were despatched in one, and true it is that when my mistress was before him, his eyes ne'er left her face.

Right seemly she looketh, thought I, as I stood behind her chair when they supped. Never before had she borne

herself so bravely, and rich were the gauds that tirewoman furnished forth. One evening my Lady came into the great hall in a gown of cherry red, made from the thread of the silkworm and wonderous soft and fine. Above this was a long coat with wide pointed sleeves, and it was bound about her with a sash of cloth that shone like silver. Her hair was woven with strings of pearls, large and white, and over her hung a veil like unto a spider's web, set full with shining threads. Well do I remember all this, for it was the first time that ever I had seen such richness of apparel.

Till now we had been friends together, playmates. The priest whom my Lord Gaston had brought to dwell in the castle taught us to read, and when we irked him overmuch sent us packing. Then would we spend the

time running over the great old castle, shooting with the bow and arrow, and teaching the shagged greyhounds to fetch and carry.

But from to-day all was different. She was a great lady, and I her page Jehan, to hand her cup, to do her bidding within doors, and to ride at her litter's side or by her saddle when she went abroad, with my sword loosened and hand steady and prompt at her need.

On the fourth day my Lord Gaston rode out with the Duc de Berry to see him fare forth. My mistress stood upon the steps as they set out, with her sky-blue jewel in her hair and her cheeks like maybuds. The Duc had bent and kissed her hand, and of a truth I heard him say, —

“Farewell, mistress. Thou wilt hear from me again, and that shortly.”

She saith never a word, but looked into his face and smiled.

Now once again it was "Jehan here" and "Jehan there," and we fell back into our old ways. I digged and tilled for her the garden patch without the walls of the castle, for this was a year of richness, and my Lady's gillyflowers and lavender, lilies and coriander, showed bright beside the dull pot-herbs, anise, mustard, and storax, and the beds of leeks, dittany, lettuces, and garden-cress. We had words over the poppies.

"Jehan," saith she, "didst ever see the poppies brighter than they be this spring?"

"Fair they be, mistress, and of a size too, so that the seeds will be choice, and none need suffer for lack of a sleeping draught if they be ill!"

“ Mean you to save all the flowers for seeds ? ”

“ Of a truth, yes, mistress, since they be so fine.”

“ But, Jehan, thou knowest that I love the poppies, and sure they were planted for me.”

Now this was true, but the flowers were so exceeding fine, and gave promise of such a crop of seeds, that I fairly loathed to give one up. So I tried to coax Mistress Eleonore with other buds.

“ Jehan,” suddenly quoth she, “ run you to the court and fetch me out a garden tool. I would help thee myself to-day.”

I hurried away, as she bade me, and when I got back there she stood in the midst of the poppy-bed, with a wreath of them in her black hair, and both hands full! I stopped short, and she

began to laugh at me, looking so like the fairies we hear of dancing in a ring, that though I felt the loss of the poppy-seeds sore, all I could find to say was, —

“ Oh, mistress, the seeds! ”

“ But the flowers are so beautiful, and the seeds but ill-favoured black things, as thou knowest well, Jehan, wherefore I chose the flowers.”

There was naught to do but to hope that the buds that were left would bloom freely; and shortly we went back to the castle, for the day was growing warm, the birds had ceased their morning songs, and the wind was no longer sweet and cool. As we reached the gate, there came to us, faint and far away, the sound of a winded horn. We turned, and out over the marches we could see coming many knights, their armour glistening in the sun, and

their lances shining like so many points of fire.

“Who be these, think you, Jehan?” said my mistress, as with her wreath of poppies she stood and watched them come. But I knew no more than she, and soon the stranger knights rode by us into the court, each man as he passed doffing his cap to my mistress, who stood tall and smiling, and bowing in her turn.

“Jehan,” quoth she, “run as fast as ever thou canst and find the tirewoman and send her to me. Perchance my cousin will wish me to come to the great hall.”

I was glad to be off, since I was eager to know who the great lord was that rode so bravely at the head of his vassals. In the court all was bustle, but I heard it said that he was a friend to the King, and that he bore

the name of Seigneur Bureau de la Rivière.

What was his mission to my Lord none could guess. But as one day followed another and yet he tarried, my Lady's tirewoman could hold her tongue no longer, and out the secret came. Never could I bide that woman! 'T was always touch and go between us.

“Knave,” quoth she, and “Jade,” say I, till the ill-favoured wench would to my Lady Eleonore in tears.

Now the secret that she blabbed was this,—that the Seigneur de la Rivière had come to ask for the hand of my little mistress at the suit of the Duc de Berry!

It seems that the King laughed when he heard that his uncle the Duc, who had seen a round fifty years and had sons who were men grown, wished to

take to wife "une fillette," as he calleth her, of twelve years. But the Duc held fast to his cause, and the King was but a lad of sixteen himself with a wife two years younger, and many of the court were of scarce greater age. So the Duc had persevered in his wishes, and the Seigneur de la Rivière had come to treat with my master, the Comte de Foix, who did not wish to give up his young cousin to one so much her elder. So he put off the Seigneur, saying,—

"The child is too young. Let the marriage wait till she grows up."

These days I saw little of my mistress. The flowers and the dogs were all forgot, and she was housed with that tirewoman all the bright days. One morning there was an exceeding bustle and rushing hither and yon. Then was I bidden to put on my bravest suit

and attend my mistress to the great hall. It took me far less time than it took my Lady to put on all her fine gear, and when we came into the hall, there sat my Lord, and beside him sat the stranger lord, while all around them were many score of knights and lances.

My Lord cometh forward, and taking my mistress by the hand, he leadeth her to a seat in the great oak chair beside him, whilst I stood but a step behind her. My Lord looked at her kindly, and then quoth he, —

“Knowest why I sent for thee, child?”

My mistress drew up her head quite proud, and answered bravely, though her cheeks were like poppy buds, —

“In truth I do, Cousin.”

“I think that thou art over-young to

make a marriage yet," began my Lord; but my mistress saith quickly, before he could go further, —

"Dear Cousin, our new Queen Isa-beau had but fourteen years when she wedded King Charles, and it is said that she hath meaner height than I."

Her cousin smiled.

"Thou knowest that the Duc de Berry is far more in years than thyself?"

"Yet methinks I could like him well," saith the Lady Eleonore, "and indeed this marriage suits me much."

She looked so full of spirit, and withal so fair, that the Seigneur de la Rivière thought it well to take now a part himself.

"The lady knows her mind," saith he, "and for a truth the Duc loves her right well. King Charles, who is a youthful liege himself, will welcome

her, and at Paris she will find all things that a young maid loves.”

“I had forgot that in my lonely castle the young maid lacked much that other maids have. Still, child, thou knowest that I have loved thee well.”

At this my mistress went to her cousin and knelt by his knee, holding his hand and kissing of it.

“Dearest Cousin,” she cried, “there has been naught lacking in all thy kindness for me, and if it is thy wish that I stay with thee, send the Seigneur hence.”

My Lord smiled sadly and shook his head, saying with a sigh, —

“The child has chosen for herself, my Lord.”

Then my mistress withdrew, and I followed her. How my head spun! My mistress to wed a lord almost as

great as the King himself, to go to Paris to dwell, and I, Jehan, to go with her!

Of a truth I scarce drew breath for the next ten days, since we were to go forth straightway, and there was hurly-burly to get us furnished forth. At the end of that time we set out towards Paris, my Lord Comte sending five hundred lances to safeguard my Lady, and the Duc de Berry sending as many more, with litters, chariots, jewels, and fine robes to meet us on our way. I have not speech to tell how fine we fared on that journey. At every halt great silken tents were spread, my Lord Duc had sent minstrels for to sing at my Lady's pleasure, and there were litters hung with scarlet and gold to carry her when she was a-weary. There were women to wait on her, pages to run her bidding, and

Jehan, chief of them all, always at hand, with a chain of bright gold about his neck, to show his new rank.

III

WHEN we came nigh Paris, word came from my Lord Duc that we were to halt at the Abbey of St. Denis, whither the King and Queen and the Ducs de Berry and Burgundy, with my Lady's father, were to come to welcome us.

When my Lady heard that her father was to come also, she turneth to me, who knew that she had not seen him since she was a small babe of three. "By my faith, Jehan," quoth she, "I fear my own father more than the lord I am to marry, since he is the greater stranger of the two. Why think you he cometh?"

“Truth, I know not, my Lady,” say I; and it was not till later that it was known that this strange father, hearing of his daughter’s beauty and that she was to wed his friend the Duc de Berry, came forth from Paris with the King and Queen to look on her.

We lay that night at the Abbey, and before we went to rest heard mass in the cathedral itself. Never had I dreamed that so noble a building had been made by men’s hands. And this was but the beginning. Gold and silver statues stood on the great altar; great coloured stones the names of which I knew not, sparkled on the cups and dishes of gold that were used for the holy offices, while the books that the holy fathers held in their hands, as well as their robes and mitres, gave forth sparkles like unto a rainbow. After the mass they took my Lady to show

her the treasures, and I, following behind, saw with these eyes, that had never thought to see such things, the great golden sword of King Charlemagne, and so many other wonders of gold and jewels that my mind could hold them not.

What made my blood to stir most amid all that world of rich and holy things, was a banner that hung high over the great altar. Torn it was, yet in its folds glowed the colour of flame; and one of the good fathers turning to me, who stood with mouth agape, I doubt not, asked, —

“ Good lad, knowest thou what banner hangest there ? ”

“ Nay, father,” answered I, “ and how should I, since I am but newly come from the far-away castle of Orthez, which, as thou knowest, lies in the lonely marches to the west.”

“Look, son,” then spoke he, “at the greatest treasure of France. ’Tis the Oriflamme, that sacred banner which hath led her hosts so oft to victory.”

And as I looked on it, and knew how many brave knights had found death under its folds, my heart was fuller than ever before. For what is more noble than to give one’s life for one’s country? Even a poor page may do that, though he may never hope to fall under a banner which may be borne only by princes and nobles. That night I slept on a monk’s pallet, spread on the floor of the passage without my Lady’s door, yet were my dreams always of war and clashings of arms, and there floated ever through my visions that wonderous banner of flame-colour.

Next morn we were all astir with the dawn. ’T was my task to see that

my Lady's litter had been made fresh and seemly, that the pages were all point device in their looks, so that we should not bear our part ill before the nobles coming from Paris to greet us.

About sunset they arrived. The King rode at the head of them all, with his two uncles on either hand, the Duc de Berry on the right and the Duc de Burgoyne on the left. Behind came the Queen and her ladies in an open car, and on either side rode the great lords, two by two, carrying their swords and shining in their armour of gold.

The Duc de Berry cometh forward and, taking my Lady by the hand, led her to the King, who kissed her on the brow, and then took her to the Queen. They were so handsome, these two, the Queen and my Lady, that all marvelled thereat. Queen Isabeau was of a fairness like unto milk and roses, while my

Lady, who stood a full hand taller, was of a dark brownness, which looked but the darker beside the golden-haired Queen. Shortly the Queen turneth to a tall and dark noble who stood behind her, and saith she with a smile, —

“ Well, Comte, hast thou naught to say ? ”

Then he came forward, and taking the hand of my Lady in his, looketh her long in the face. At last he looks less stern, and then he saith,

“ If thou hadst looked like thy mother, child, thou and I hadst not met to-day. But I see well thou art my own child, and carry in thy brow and eyes the colour of a true daughter of Auvergne.”

One needed only to look at them as they stood side by side, to see that they were of one race. He, like the King, kisseth my Lady on the brow, and then he turneth to the Duc de Berry, and

placing in his hand the little one of my Lady, he saith, —

“One may not wonder longer at your choice, my Lord Duc.”

This night, like the last one, we lay in the Abbey, but there was feasting and gaiety, at least as much as seemed good in a holy house. Then next day we took our way to Paris, my Lady riding in the car with the Queen and her ladies, and I looked on her with marvel to see how one who had scarce seen aught but a squire's lady and the wenches about the castle, and those who had taught us, could bear herself so bravely, as if all her life she had known aught but courts.

Then after a brief space cometh the marriage at Paris, where King Charles himself giveth the bride away. For five days there were masques and feasting, balls and jousts, in which even

the King takes a part. Many of these balls were at the Palace of St. Pol, where lived the King and Queen; some there were at the Hôtel de la Reine Blanche, where dwelt the Queen of Navarre, and there were others yet at the Hôtel de Nesle which the Duc de Berry gave to my mistress, the Duchess Eleonore, for her wedding gift.

Methought we had been merry at Orthez, but at Paris it was like a minstrel's tale!

Who can wonder that my mistress was happy? She sang and danced, my Lord Duc adored her, everybody loved her for her sweet and gentle ways, and there were none about the palace but that she knew and cared for.

“Jehan,” she saith to me one day, “art thou happy here?”

“Yea, mistress, since this great city is to be my home.”

“Dost thou never think of those days when we trained the dogs at Orthez ? ”

“Faith an’ I do, mistress, though it is but seldom, and I love the brave doings here. Besides, where thou goest, there must Jehan follow.”

The days slipped away and were none too long. I fed the pet squirrel with its collar of fair pearls which the King had given to my mistress, and the monkey too, and the flying birds, for my mistress loved ever to have antic creatures about her. At the hunts I ride close at hand, and as at Orthez, where my mistress the Duchess goeth, there goeth Jehan. Once when we chased the deer at Val-la-Reine, the stag, a-weary and dazed, took refuge in a barn. Our King, the Well-beloved, crieth out, —

“Spare him, spare him,” for the

huntsmen ran into the barn to cut the poor beast's throat. Then saith the King from his kind heart,—

“Never shall this deer be hunted more. His life shall be his own from this day forth.”

Saying which, he pulled from his saddle-cloth a splendid fleur-de-lys, and turned to some of his men for a chain with which to hang it on the creature's neck. None had one; so my Duchess took from her own neck a chain of gold, and it was hanged about the deer's neck to show that it was the King's, and none might do it ill.

Each day there was some new sport, and I had scant time to do aught but follow my mistress. As one morn she stood playing with the monkey, a beast that had no regard for my fingers, but was ever pleased to be petted by my Duchess, my Lady's eyes roved to the

beds of gay posies that bloomed without on the terrace. They put to shame the ones we tended in the old days by the castle wall, but my Duchess cried, —

“There is not a posy here as bright as the poppies that grew at Orthez, nor one so white as the gillyflowers. ’T was a pretty garden, and I loved it well. Yet I cannot say but what I love these too.”

She stepped out on the terrace, and called back over her shoulder, —

“See that the cup of gold that the monkey broke be mended.” I loved not this task, since it seemed a shame to me that so grievous a beast should have his food from so fair a cup, while many of his betters had none.

Soon after my mistress was wedded to my Lord Duc, the great fair of St. Denis was set out in the meadow, “Pré aux Clercs.” Thither went we with the

King, Queen, and all the court. Such marvels as were spread out there for sale! Jewels and stuffs wrought with gold and gems; pictures and holy books painted in colours and with gold; carvings made from wood, and from the great white teeth of strange beasts which they saith live in the sea; cups of gold shaped like unto lilies and roses; swords and spears, battle-axes and shields, armour and horse-trappings, till one knew not which way to turn.

If it was a fine show in daytime, my certes, what a sight it was at night! Every stall was ablaze with torches, and there were crowds of strange peoples of divers colours and from far-away lands, with soldiers and singers on every hand.

My mistress had never seen before such a sight, no more than I; and she

chose many a rich and curious toy, and my Lord Duc smiled, and gave her all her heart's desire.

Yet think not that my Lady had ever gauds and merry doings in her mind. Being but young, she loved these well, as what young maid does not? But her heart was ever loyal to her friends, as presently I shall set forth.

IV

IT befell, after we had dwelt three years in Paris, and my Duchess was just turned of fifteen, that there was tumult at the court. King Charles the Well-beloved, whose fits of madness caused so much havoc (owing to the mischief wrought by his uncles when he was too ill of mind and body to rule himself) was again out of his mind.

The Seigneur de la Rivière, whom my Duchess had ever loved since he had arranged her marriage and fetched her to Paris to my Lord the Duc de Berry, was, by the order of the Duc de Burgundy, seized and held to die. His friends, lest they too should suffer for 't, feared to help him. The King, as hath been said, was ill; the Queen cared not what happened so long as she was not irked. But my Duchess clenched her little hand and saith,—

“He shall not die!”

Just how to serve him she knew not; so she cometh to her Lord, the Duc de Berry, and cast herself on her knees before him.

“Oh, dear my lord,” cried she, sobbing, “this man who hath done no wrong, and whom we know and love, must die, since none but I durst speak for him.”

The Duc, who loved her well, raised her and saith,—

“Take comfort, dear one.”

“But, my Lord, what comfort is there for me, when one who gave me happiness and thee, is in danger of his life, and for no wrongdoing, neither ?”

“Dear heart,” answered my Lord the Duc, “I too love him, since he brought thee to me, and what man can do, that will I for thy sake and his.”

“If he be not saved, then will I sorrow always,” wept my Duchess.

My Lord Duc went forth, and though the King was only at times come to his wits again, my Lord got from him a command that the Seigneur de la Rivière should be sent overseas, and not slain.

This did but half content my mistress. When the King grew well again, my Duchess plead with him so prettily,

that as he loved right well to pleasure her, he allowed the Seigneur de la Rivière to come home, and to him restored all his castles and his wealth. Greatly my mistress rejoiceth, and giveth thanks to both her Lord and the King.

Now the Seigneur, when once more in honour and in wealth he came to his home, in token for his thanks for all she had wrought in his behalf, brought to my mistress a coffer filled with rich gifts. The coffer was in itself a marvel, since it was painted all over with little flying boys, who bore in their hands flowers and wreaths. All the rest of it was like unto gold, and it stood upon four feet cut in the shape of great paws.

When the coffer was opened, there seemeth no end to the splendid things my mistress brought forth,—tissues glis-

tening like moonbeans, wrought stuffs of many colours, and chains and jewels. Chiefest amongst the rich treasures was a length of velvet from the great city called Genoa, the mate to which was not in all the court. It was blue in colour, the which my mistress ever loveth, — just the shade of the sky of a sunny day at noon. Wrought all over it in threads of purest silver were flying doves. My faith, it seemeth as if their long wings fairly moved!

“Oh,” cried my Duchess Eleonore, “never was such a lovely robe seen before, and it cometh just in time, too, since the ball that Queen Blanche giveth to the Queen’s maid on her marriage will be shortly.”

My Duchess had the velvet fashioned into a robe so splendid that all marvelled. It fell from her shoulders and flowed three metres’ length upon the

floor, and the doves of silver fluttered and shone with every step she taketh. Above her brow rose the tall hennin that Queen Isabeau so loved to wear and to have the ladies of her court wear also, and from this fell a veil of silver like unto the doves.

The night of the ball was at hand, and none looking on my stately Duchess would deem that she had but fifteen years. So heavy was the robe, and of such length, that as I walked behind I bore it for her.

The palace shone bravely with torches and flambeaux set in the wall, and borne in the hands of many lackeys all about the rooms. Our King, the Well-beloved, no longer ill, was full of pleasure at the masques which had been planned for this ball. He was scarce older than was I, since he was but nineteen years, and when



“NONE LOOKING ON MY STATELY DUCHESS WOULD DEEM THAT SHE HAD BUT FIFTEEN YEARS.”—Page 48.

he was not ill, ever loved to mingle in all the sports going forward.

The dancing had come to an end. Quickly a space was cleared, and as I stood behind my Lady, a loud voice crieth out, —

“The wild men, the wild men! Give the wild men room!”

Of a truth they were frightful to see, — five chained together, led by a sixth who leaped along in front shouting, all of them being covered with long shaggy hair after the manner of some strange beasts.

As the mummers passed, for they were but dressed to look like wild men, I tweaked betwixt finger and thumb a bit of the fur, and lo, it was but ravelled tow. Now I knew right well why the word had been passed that none with lights should move about the room. With what wild shouts did

the mummers leap here and there amongst the guests! Some were affrighted and ran screaming away. The leader of them all runneth up to my mistress.

“Dost thou know me?” cried he.

Right firmly she held him by the hand.

“Not yet,” saith she, “but shall ere I let thee go.”

Then my blood froze with the horror of a scream I heard, then another and another. In an instant mummers, guests, room, and all were in a blaze. One of the company, to see the mummers better, had seized a torch and held it near them. The tow sprang into flame, and the five men who were tied together were instantly on fire and shrieking out. One only loosed himself and ran and plunged into a tank for washing of the silver, and which happened to be full of water.

All through the tumult and cries there stood my Duchess mid the flying brands, which I fought as best I might with cap and hands.

“Come away,” I cried, “oh, mistress, come.”

“Nay, help me to save him, Jehan,” was what she whispered back.

Her fair veil shrivelled with the heat, the flying slivers blistered her arms and neck. Cries of “The King, the King, save the King,” grew loud and louder. Queen Isabeau fainted, yet my brave Duchess stood there till every flying spark had been stamped out, holding gathered about her the heavy velvet robe. When at last the fire was all subdued, she threw aside the blue robe that had been so fair, and there under its scorched folds, in his monstrous suit of tow, knelt the King, safe and unharmed.

“Hasten, Sire,” cried she, “the Queen waiteth you. Throw over you Jehan’s cloak lest some wanton spark fly near you.”

The King hurried away, and then think not but that I hastened to get my mistress home. And oh, my Lord’s pride in my Lady!

And oh, the King’s words when he came next morn to thank her, kneeling on one knee to kiss her hand!

The sky-blue robe, say you? What became of that?

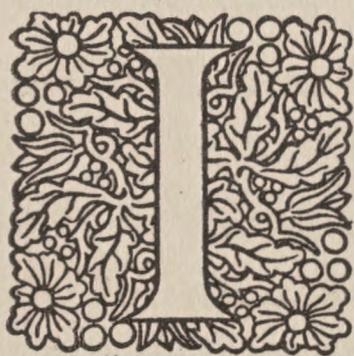
My mistress packed it away in the coffer that had brought it from Genoa, with her own hands, and from that time my Lord taketh for his pennon one of sky-blue ground with a silver dove set in its midst.



THE PRINCESS WINS

1417

I



IN MY OWN YOUTH-ful days, when turning over the leaves of story-books, I used to pause at those tales which began "Once upon a time." I always had a feeling that there was something of the fairy-tale about stories which began in this fashion, and I should like so to begin this day.

For truly the story I am about to tell you is but one incident in the life of a girl whose whole career was so full of ups and downs—alas, most often downs,—that it reads, even in the

solemn old Dutch documents, like the most fanciful tale of the imagination.

When she died at thirty-seven, it seems as if our Jacqueline had dared everything and lost, — lost kingdom, home, and friends. Yet even in a life so full of disaster there were some bright spots, and in this story you will hear how once at least our Princess wins.

She was born, our heroine, at her father's palace at The Hague on St. James' Day, 1401. The little girl was baptised Jacoba, in honour of the holy day of her birth, Jacobus being the Latin form of the name James. Gradually Jacoba was changed into the French form of Jacqueline, though in the strange old documents of the times her name is written as Jacob, or Jacque, or sometimes Madam Jake, and often as Jaque de Bavière.

Jacqueline was born a princess, and when she was three years old, had the title given her of "Daughter of Holland," as she was the sole heir and successor of her father, William the Sixth, Count of Holland, who on the death of his father had succeeded him as Count of Zealand and Hainault.

In the Middle Ages, when might made right, possessions were held in many cases by him who had the strongest arm, who could muster the greatest number of followers and had the most powerful connections. Marriage with princes who had great possessions of land or would inherit them was one of the ways by which sovereigns of small states strengthened their positions, and this was one reason why mere babies were given in marriage by their parents. You see, the parents could not go to war against each

other when it was arranged that their children were to be married when they grew up!

Little Jacqueline was no exception to the rule, and before she was quite five years old was formally betrothed to John, Duke of Tourraine, second son of Charles the Sixth of France, called the "Well-beloved."

The betrothal of Jacqueline to her bridegroom of nine years old took place in the old French town of Compiègne, where both the French and Dutch courts were present. The fine old palace with its great number of rooms was elegantly furnished for the occasion, and the little Jacqueline had in her company Staes, Jan, and Hans, her drummer, piper, and trumpeter! Now these were very important personages in those times, — they amused the company when there was nothing

else to be done, they had their duties among the soldiers; and in some of the old papers which are still preserved, and which show the expenses of this betrothal down to the last groot, it is duly set down that Staes, Jan, and Hans are each to have six French crowns to cover their travelling expenses. This would be equal to about nine dollars of our money.

Neither of the fathers of the two children was present at the betrothal, for King Charles had one of his attacks of insanity, and Count William had been bitten by a dog, and was not able to be there, either.

But the mothers had seen to it that nothing was lacking to make the ceremony a handsome one. The Dutch expense account tells of new clothes for everybody connected with Jacqueline, even those who had to stay at

home having wedding garments and fine new hat-bands.

When the betrothal ceremonies were over, the young bridegroom was handed over to Jacqueline's mother, and the two children were taken home to Holland to be brought up together.

From time to time they had presents sent to them from their subjects, which seem more like taxes than free gifts, and which were duly set down in the archives. For instance, there were fish and wine for John, and there were many ells of "very fine cloth of silk" for Madam Jake. They had a special dispensation sent them, too, so that they could eat meat on fast-days; and this dispensation was extended also to the napkin-bearer, the cook, and ten other servants who had to taste the dishes beforehand.

You see, our Jacqueline lived in the

days when people were sometimes poisoned by their enemies, so that royalty had "tasters," who ate of every dish before it was placed on the table for their Majesties to eat, and if the tasters did not suffer, why then it was deemed safe for their masters to eat.

Notwithstanding all these things, the children passed many happy years studying French, English, and Latin, and in hunting, hawking, riding on horseback, playing tennis and ball, and, best of all, in skating on the long winding canals. Perhaps they skated the "Dutch Roll," and Hans, Staes, and Jan went along too, to make things merry with the fife, trumpet, and drum. These were their pleasures. It was a more solemn matter when they had to learn how to rule their kingdoms and subjects, for the little bridegroom stood next but one to the great throne of

France, and Jacqueline was heir to her father's kingdom.

They were married in 1415, when Jacqueline was fourteen years old.

Two years later, her young husband, who, by the death of his elder brother, had become Dauphin and heir to the throne of France, died. The poor lad breathed his last at Compiègne, in the very palace where he had been betrothed, whether by poison or from getting overheated at tennis, none can say, but at any rate while he was away from his wife and from his family.

As if this was not enough, just two months later, Count William, the kind and loving father of Jacqueline, died also. The poor girl, without father or husband to protect her or her possessions, turned to her Fatherland to pronounce her sovereign of Zealand and Hainault.

But there were others who had their eyes and minds fixed on the sturdy little kingdom, and, truth to tell, they were the last persons one would suspect of such ideas, since they were Jacqueline's own kinsfolk. But so it was; and in order to strengthen her position, and to allow her subjects to know and love her and to pay her their vows of fealty, Jacqueline, as was the custom in those times, started on a "progress," or tour through her various cities.

These royal progresses were very splendid affairs, we can hardly imagine them now, and on this occasion Jacqueline's mother bore her company, and there were many of her most powerful nobles as well.

On June 12, 1417, when the cavalcade rode into Mons, the whole city was gay to welcome the young girl

who came thither to take her vows of sovereignty. How prettily the city, old even then, must have looked! From the windows fluttered banners of bright-coloured cloth, many of them worked with patterns of gold and silver! So large were some of these banners that they stretched from window to window across the street. Many were the arches wreathed with flowers and branches under which Jacqueline passed, and streamers waved everywhere.

Leaning from the casements were ladies richly dressed and holding chains of flowers; and children were here, there, and everywhere, come to see their little Princess, who was scarce more than a child herself.

Many great lords there were as well, having come forth from their castles on the wooded hills of Hainault, followed by their retainers and serfs, the

former clad in suits of bright armour and riding on horseback, while the latter ran on foot beside the men-at-arms, and bore on their collars the names of their masters, and their doublets were of leather, and many times their feet were bare.

Jacqueline on a milk-white palfrey, with her mother at her left hand, rode at the head of them all. There are a few quaint old pictures which show her to have been slender and tall, brown-haired, and without the high cheek bones which are so usual in her countrywomen. On this occasion her appearance was royal indeed. She wore a gown of cloth of gold, which glittered in the warm June sunshine. Her coif, or headdress, was bound by many a chain of gold and jewels, suitable to her rank as Dauphine of France and Daughter of Holland.

She had not advanced far within the city before a deputation of young girls, all dressed in white, stood forth to meet her.

“Hail, Daughter of Holland, welcome to Mons,” the leader of them said, and stepping forward, hung her chaplet of flowers on Jacqueline’s arm. One by one each young girl followed in turn, and Jacqueline, turning with smiling face to her mother, said, —

“Our good city of Mons shows its loyalty in pleasing fashion, Madame. If all our other cities bear themselves like this, we care not for our uncle of Burgundy, who seeks to take our inheritance from us, nor for the Egmonts nor Arkels, nor any who are enemies of our house.”

“In truth all seemeth fair, my daughter. Our good burghers always respond to our need, though our nobles

sometimes think too highly of their power.”

“Our loyal burghers! In truth they are our best friends. Yet remember how many nobles ride with us this day, and have sworn to urge our cause as though it were their own.”

They rode slowly forward, the little Princess pleased and happy at the homage of her subjects, bowing and smiling. At last the church of St. Waltrude was reached. Here Jacqueline dismounted, and entering the dim old building, walked slowly up the central aisle till she reached the high altar. Here she knelt, kissed the holy relics, and swore to preserve “all usages and privileges of the city, to protect the church, to uphold the right, to dispel the wrong.”

Then, seated on a lofty throne that had been set up beside the altar, she

received the homage of her subjects, and their vows of loyalty to her and to her cause.

After the solemn ceremonies at the church were over, the royal party had a banquet given in their honour by the burghers of the city, who had arranged many festivities to give them pleasure.

Can you not see our Princess with rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes standing at the table's head? Her soft brown hair is tightly bound to her head and covered with a cap wrought of threads of gold strung with pearls. Embroidery of threads of gold and coloured silks in which the Dutch excelled, enrich her gown, which is of the heaviest silk that even Flanders can produce. Long chains of pearls, which were sold by weight, hang about her neck, and fur of minever binds and edges the cuts and slashes in her

great sleeves and on the body of her gown.

Besides the banquet, there was planned a tournament, a favourite occasion for showing knightly deeds, and it was to be held on a grassy mead just without the walls of the city, on the day following the paying of homage, and entry into the city.

Thither early in the morning trooped the inhabitants of the town. Among the first to go were groups of apprentices, dressed in the uniforms of their guilds or trade societies. These trudged on foot, glad enough of a holiday. Mingling among them were serfs or bondsmen, easily to be told by their metal collars. Some carried burdens for their masters who should arrive later in the day, while some merely swung a cudgel, and hurried on as if conscious of their lowly position.

As the day wore on, the road was dusty with the men-at-arms, knights, nobles, and their attendants, with substantial burghers with their apprentices, and with groups of maidens from the town, eager to see the gay company, and looking pretty enough themselves in their close-fitting white caps and scarlet kirtles.

Only occasionally, walking sedately by her father's side, shrouded in a long cloak to keep her clothes fresh from the dust, came some tradesman's daughter, her neck encircled with strings of coral beads, and her gold earrings, handed down through many generations, a trifle longer than those of the serving maidens, and the inevitable cap edged with lace, or of finest plaited muslin, while theirs, though snowy white, were of coarse material.

Now and again amid the crowd

swung covered litters, bearing either the wife of some dignitary, or some high official who preferred this manner of travelling to going on horse or mule back.

At an hour past noon, out from the palace yard rode a troop of men on horseback, bright in a livery of orange and black. Their business it was to clear the road of any such as cumbered it, so that the passage to the field should be kept free, since the Princess Jacqueline would ride thither on her palfrey, to show herself to her subjects, who had prepared the tournament in her behalf.

As the cavalcade issued from the palace yard, there came first twoscore knights riding two abreast, each in a full suit of armour which sparkled like silver in the sun, each carrying his shield and a pennon of bright silk.

Then came the members of the council of Mons, in rich robes of velvet, furred and wrought, and showing on their breasts the heavy gold chains of their office. They were men who showed on their faces intelligence and a sense of the importance of their office, slow to smile and grave, but true as steel to what they deemed the right, and loyal subjects when once won to their sovereign.

Next came Jacqueline with her mother beside her, both riding on splendid horses, whose caparison was as rich as cloth and gold could make it. Right royally shone our Princess, robed in a gown of damask which showed in the pattern tulips of many shades, the flower of all others most dear to the Dutch heart, the which were made richer yet by stitchery of brilliant silks. Around the neck and long sleeves,

which reached almost to her feet, were bands of ermine fur, and beneath the flowing cap, made truly in the very shape of those worn by the peasant maidens, her hair was bound with many a string of pearl.

Behind her came those who were to take part in the tournament; and never had Mons, staid old city, seen a sight of such splendour. Forty knights came ahead at a stately pace, each mounted on a noble steed in trappings of velvet, for the steeds of the fallen knights became the prizes of the victors, and it was a matter of pride to have both horse and harness worthy to be a prize. After the knights rode forty ladies, chosen for their beauty, all richly dressed in colours of the gayest hues, mounted on palfreys, each one riding alone, and leading by a silver chain a knight completely armed for tilting,

astride a splendid horse, which also wore armour, and a plume of feathers.

Minstrels and trumpeters followed along, blowing on their instruments; and then came the people, shouting and cheering, and hurrying along so as not to miss any of the sport at the field.

It was a lovely sight that met their eyes when the mead was reached. The grassy sward was dotted with gay and constantly changing groups, bright awnings and banners were stretched to keep off the sun from spectators and combatants, and almost encircling the tilting ground were fine trees, beneath whose shade many horses were tethered, while their attendants lounged on the grass. So busy were all with the scene before them, that none noted the cloud rising dark above the horizon, and he who called attention to it would

have been but deemed a churl for his pains.

In the little enclosure set apart for the Princess and her immediate attendants, the hangings were of equal splendour with the rest of the arrangements. It was hung with gay strips of cloth, and with chains of flowers, and it was placed midway between the lists, so that the tilting could be seen to the best advantage.

All was ready; the heralds rode forth, each with his silver trumpet at his lips prepared to announce the opening of the fray, when a long rolling peal of thunder startled alike the spectators in the stands as well as those who stood upon the greensward pressing eagerly forward to see the first shock of the encounter.

The first peal was followed by another and another. The wind whirled

across the wide meadow and tore into shreds the awnings which had been stretched against the sun. Rain descended in floods, and before Jacqueline and her party could take shelter in the rude stalls that had been built below the galleries, and in which the horses were stabled, they were pelted with hailstones so large, and which came with such force, that one of them left on Jacqueline's cheek a cruel bruise.

Even centuries later, and in our own country, women and girls were burned as witches, and when our Daughter of Holland lived, many things which would seem quite natural to us were called "omens," and were supposed to foretell either good or ill.

This hail-storm was judged a bad omen for poor Jacqueline. So strong a hold did it take on the superstitious

people that while many important transactions and details of history are lost, a full account of this storm has been left in various Dutch documents, with fabulous tales as to the size of the hailstones, and that they killed cattle and ruined crops. Thus sadly ended for Princess Jacqueline the day that had opened so fair. Right bravely did she bear the hurried ride back into the city. With her mother she withdrew into their apartments as soon as they reached Mons, and was seen no more that night.

Indeed so wrought upon was Jacqueline by the great storm and the misfortune attending it, that, as soon as they were alone, she exclaimed to her mother, —

“Let us away as soon as our train can be made ready.”

“Nay, dear child, that would but in-

cense our good people of Mons, who did their best to pleasure and to honour you.”

“But, mother, that is all past, and see the grievous bruise upon my cheek. It ill becomes the face of a princess.”

“That it does, my dearest, but it is but just to remember that, cruel though it be, unguents and laving it with soft water will heal it, and by the morrow thy cheek will show no stain. Neither must thou forget that for this bruise none of thy subjects should be blamed.”

To this the little Princess made no reply, yet could not her mother induce her to remain longer in the city; and shortly after sunrise the next morning, the cavalcade took their way from the city of Mons, Jacqueline travelling in a litter, since she chose not to show herself again in that ill-omened place.

II

AFTER the mishap at Mons, the young Princess journeyed to other of her loyal towns,—to Delft, to Leyden, to Amsterdam and Haarlem. Though all these cities paid homage to Jacqueline as their sovereign, and supported her claims to Zealand and Hainault, there was a strong party growing up against her, chiefly on account of her youth, and because she was a girl.

The headquarters of this party was at Dordrecht, the one city which refused to pay homage to Jacqueline. Here in Dordrecht the leaders of the opposing party were joined by one of the uncles of Jacqueline, known as "John the Pitiless," who was eager to rob his niece of her inheritance. He proposed to be appointed governor, and

in this way gradually get into his own hands the whole power.

Now indeed Jacqueline showed that she was strong at heart, for though but sixteen, she immediately took steps in person to suppress all such designs on the part of her uncle, and levied troops, gathered supplies, and started towards rebellious Dordrecht.

Right bravely she looked, our little Princess, as she rode at the head of her troops, and ever from time to time she turned to her mother with a bright smile, and some such word as —

“Courage, dear Madame, ever saw you troops with braver front than ours ?”

Or, after a pause, —

“Think you that mine uncle of Burgundy will expect to see us in person, come to defend our rights ?”

“Thou art my brave girl. Wouldst

that thy father wert here to guard and guide thee!"

But her mother looked anxious, and as she rode in her litter near her daughter, it was she who from time to time called to her side those brave nobles who had espoused her daughter's cause, and to whose advice she looked to bring the assault to a successful conclusion.

After the first day's march Jacqueline's bright confidence was shaken. Wearied with being all day in the saddle and bearing the weight of her suit of armour, even though the shirt was of the finest Milan steel and flexible and light, Jacqueline dismissed all her attendants, and begged her mother to bide with her for a space before going to rest.

When all were gone and they were alone together and the curtains to the

tent secured, poor Jacqueline, but a tired girl after all, cast herself down beside her mother, and hid her face in her lap.

“ Oh, mother,” cried she, “ methinks I’d give all Dordrecht to be once more in our own palace in The Hague, safe sheltered in mine own room, and rid of this armour which chafes me so! ”

“ Nay, daughter, speak not so loud, bend thy lips to mine ear, for truly it would shame you much should the men-at-arms without hear thy plaints.”

“ But, mother — ”

“ Lower, dear child, speak lower. What! weeping? Countess of Hainault and Daughter of Holland shedding tears? ”

“ Thy daughter was I, mother, before I was Daughter of Holland. So fearsome am I of those cruel men we go to meet, with their spears and

arrows. Methinks that already I feel them in my flesh"; and at the very thought there were fresh showers of tears.

"Can this be my brave Princess? Is this the maid of whom her father said, 'Brave as a lad, with more wisdom than her years, and better fitted to rule than many an elder one'? Sure, child, the hailstones have in truth bewitched thee!"

"Ah, mother, I will be brave to-morrow, since needs I must. But say thou wilt not leave me this night? Stay with me; the darkness affrights me, mother."

"Truly I had no thought not to stay with thee, dear child. See, give me thy hand, and I will sit beside thy couch till thou art fast asleep."

Jacqueline threw herself on the couch which had been hastily spread in her

tent, and made soft with the skins of fox and of bear, and drew over her buckskin doublet a cloak of frieze.

“ Kiss me, mother, as though I were once more thy little daughter, and leave me not ”; and holding her mother’s hand as she had done in babyhood, our poor little Daughter of Holland, from very weariness, fell fast asleep.

Before dawn the next day all the camp was astir. The sound of the armourers at work, the stamping and neighing of horses, the shouts of the soldiers as they hurried about their labour, made a din quite at variance with the quiet of the night, when the only sounds which disturbed the solitude were the cries of the sentries that all was well, and the occasional whinny of some restive horse.

Yet still Jacqueline slept on, and by her side her mother watched, hoping

that the sounds from without would penetrate the deep sleep of the weary girl. At last, at the door of the tent itself, sounded the notes of the bugle, and Jacqueline started up, her eyes clear and flashing, as she turned to the patient watcher at her side.

“Once more Countess of Hainault, dearest lady,” she cried, “Jacqueline the little girl has fled back to her childhood.”

Her mother drew a long breath and smiled in return.

“Let us praise St. James for that,” she answered, and pushed aside the hanging folds that covered the opening to the tent, so that the fresh morning air would sweep within.

“Hail, Lady, a bright awakening and a joyous day”; and forward pressed two pages, special attendants to Jacqueline herself, and like her dressed in

suits of bright armour. But while theirs glittered as bravely as hers, on her helmet, on her shield, and on any smallest spot which offered a space for the tool of the goldsmith, there were wrought the various heraldic devices which belonged to the Countess by right of her great and royal descent.

The younger of the two pages — so young in fact that his cheek was scarcely less rosy and fair than that of his young mistress — bore her sword and spear, which gleamed in the cold beams of the wintry sun. The elder of the two carried her shield and pennon, the last of fine blue silk, showing the arms of Bavaria quartered with those of Hainault-Holland, and watching over these was deftly embroidered the image of the Virgin and Child.

Jacqueline came to the door of her tent, and as her eyes watched the busy

scene, she looked both rested and well pleased.

“A fair omen for the Daughter of Holland this day,” she said, and pointed towards where the lad stood with her pennon. The bright clouds in the sky had but touched the faces of the Holy Virgin and the Child, and reflected in the silver threads with which they were wrought, caused them to glow with almost the colours of true flesh and blood.

“The Countess speaks well,” said Eberhard, Lord of Hoogtwoude, than whom Jacqueline had no more faithful follower, and who had just come up from the camp to see how the young Countess had rested.

“A fair sleep and a long one, thanks to my lady mother,” said Jacqueline, turning to her with a loving glance, “who was ever wont to take upon

her own shoulders the burden of my humours.”

Full well did Jacqueline repay the kindness of her mother, by her love for that lady which her dignity never caused her for a moment to conceal. Going once more within the tent, she bathed in water fresh and cold, and though the air was a thought too keen, she had the armourer summoned to rivet on her greaves, so that the legs below the knee should be well protected, lest some who were on foot among the enemy might get near and do her harm.

“Bring my helmet,” next she ordered, “and sling it to my saddle bow, for this cap of velvet shall serve me to wear till we near the troops which my false uncle hath gathered.”

Kissing her mother, she whispered in her ear,—



“ON, FOR THE LOVE OF THE DAUGHTER OF HOLLAND, AND
DEATH TO THOSE THAT DENY HER.”—Page 87.

“Fear not, lady, I be a lad this day”; and then placing her spurred foot on the knee of her page, she mounted easily into her saddle. Once on the back of her war-horse, her courage rose higher still, and seizing her pennon in her hand, she drove her horse onward, shouting in her sweet young voice,—

“On, for the love of the Daughter of Holland, and death to those that deny her!”

Across the low bare fields and through the scrubby woods rode the small army, which numbered barely a couple of thousand men. When the sun stood high in the heavens and showed the hour of noon, though the wind was keen and little comfort was to be had, they rested, for the sake of the horses as well as the men.

Whilst they stopped thus, and with fires and food sought to take such ease

as they could command, a band of picked men, less than a score, rode forward to gain what news they might of the enemy. Soon they could be seen spurring quickly back, and they brought the welcome news that "John the Pitiless" was encamped just without the town of Grocum, that the men were scattered about as if preparing to halt for the remainder of the day, and that they had learned from some faithful adherents of the Princess Jacqueline's, that her uncle had been able to muster scarce five hundred men more than were in her own little army.

At this news all sprung to their saddles, since the brief winter's day was all too short for that which they had to do, and Jacqueline with helmet on head and sword in hand, rode at their head.

Scarce an hour's brisk riding brought

them in sight of the army gathered from among those who opposed the Princess. There was much confusion evident among them, and it seemed as if they had but just learned of the approach of the Daughter of Holland, and were preparing to hold their own as best they might.

Straight as an arrow, forward to where his pennon showed the presence of her uncle, rode Jacqueline.

No need to shout encouragement to the brave men at her back, yet ever and again she would turn and call, "For love of Holland," or "For the Virgin and St. James," and ever and anon would come back the answering cry, "For love of Holland," "For St. James."

When almost within the flight of an arrow from the enemy, once again did Jacqueline turn, and this time her cry

was borne back on the wind with the clearness of a trumpet, —

“For love of the Daughter of Holland.”

At this the hoarse shout that rose among her followers could have been heard a league away. Still keeping her horse's head straight for that pennon she had marked so well, she sent her pages to the right and left, bidding the soldiers spread in a wide circle, and never draw rein till they had circled the enemy.

On they came like a whirlwind; the enemy, seeming not to know what manner of tactics they were like to meet, formed a compact body.

The rushing mass of men and horses, with Jacqueline at their head, swept madly on, nor paused nor swerved till they had flung themselves against the enemy. In a moment all was frightful

confusion, men unhorsed and being trampled underfoot by the riderless steeds, and in many cases the horses suffering themselves from wounds that had fallen on them instead of their masters.

Twice, above all the tumult and din of metal when spear met shield or helmet, could be heard the cry, "For the Daughter of Holland," and each time it brought the answering shout. At these moments even the enemy seemed to waver, as if they had not dreamed that their hereditary Princess could be there in the thick of battle in her own person.

Surrounded by the noblest of her kin and those of the highest rank among her party, Jacqueline never gave a thought to her own safety.

From right to left she flew, encouraging here, supporting there, bringing

up laggards to harass a weak spot among the enemy's forces, by the sheer might of her presence striking awe among the foe.

At last one more stolid or more cruel than the rest rode straight at her, his lance thrust at her breast. The good mail shirt she wore and her trusty shield turned aside the blow, but so sharp was the shock that she fell from her horse. Now indeed came in that training in horsemanship on which her father had ever insisted, and in which she had been practised since her earliest years. Still clinging to the bridle, she managed to keep from falling, and with the aid of her faithful pages who kept ever at her saddle, she managed to regain her seat.

“Now, by all I hold dear,” cried she, “no mercy shall be shown the enemies of Holland and my house.”

From that moment with voice and example she inspired her weary men, till with the fall of dusk on that December day they routed those that were still left alive, and sent them flying over the waste country back to Dordrecht.

Many of the enemies of Jacqueline and her house fell during this battle, the most noted, and the most vindictive as well, being that William of Arkell to whom her father desired to wed her in the interests of peace, but who stubbornly refused our little Princess and always remained one of her most bitter foes.

Her uncle, "John the Pitiless," escaped and returned to Dordrecht with the remnant of his forces. Nor was this the only effort he made to capture her lands, but for years he pursued her relentlessly, and did not hesitate at any means to gain his end.

Involved in endless wars and intrigues both with enemies within her own land as well as those abroad, the battle at Grocum was the only time when Jacqueline, Daughter of Holland, led her troops in person, and no amount of persuasion could induce her to assume command again.

The night of the victory at Grocum, the little army encamped within the city which they had wrested from the Burgundian party, and the celebration of this happy event was accompanied with feasting and much joy. A thousand healths were drunk to Jacqueline, Countess and Commander, and there were toasts to future victories, and the rosiest anticipations of success, the victors imagining that because of one triumph their enemies would be vanquished.

When the Daughter of Holland laid

herself down to sleep that night, her mother, with a happy face, bent to kiss her good night.

“Mother, dear lady,” whispered this victorious Countess of sixteen, “I pray you tell no one that last night I wept from fear!”

Her mother smiled as she kissed her, and answered in her gentle voice, —

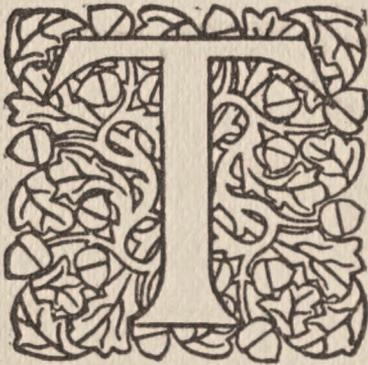
“Thou hast my promise.”



DEFENCE OF CASTLE DANGEROUS

1692

I



THE SUN SHONE bright and warm on the little frontier settlement of Verchères one crisp October morning in the year 1692.

Though the settlement was small, it was pleasantly placed on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, not more than twenty miles from Montreal, which was considered but a short distance from a place of safety in those days when homes were being hewn out of the wilderness.

The Seignior or Governor of the place was an old soldier, formerly a captain in the renowned regiment of Carignan, which was sent to New France to give aid and protection to the settlers, and to assist them in repelling the Iroquois. The officers of this great regiment were rewarded for their services by large grants of land along the rivers, which were for many years the great highways. The officers in turn rented out the land to the soldiers under them, and none save the Colonel himself was allowed to return to France, so anxious was that country to increase the population of its colonies.

When our story opens, Seignior Verchères was on military duty at Quebec, his wife had gone on a visit to Montreal, and they had left the little family at home in charge of Madelon, the only daughter, a girl about four-

teen years old. There were two young brothers, — Louis, a lad of twelve, and Alexander, who was about a year younger. There were, besides, the settlers who looked on Madelon as the representative of her father.

We can hardly picture to ourselves what a very rude place the settlement was, and as it lay near the trail of the Iroquois, it had become known throughout New France as “Castle Dangerous.”

At this time the Iroquois, containing the strong and invincible Five Nations, had two motives which swayed their savage breasts most powerfully; these were love of fighting and love of gain. They were dependent on the Dutch and English at Albany for guns, powder, lead, brandy, and many other things which the white man had brought with him from the Old World,

and which these children of the woods had come to regard only too quickly as necessary to their comfort.

True, beaver skins could buy these things which they coveted, but with the Iroquois the supply was limited. The great forests stretching to the west and northwest, and those of the upper lakes, were occupied by tribes who were bound to French interests, and it was the French traders who controlled their immense annual product of furs.

Every summer there was a great Fair at Montreal, where the trading for a whole year took place, and the remote tribes brought in their accumulated beaver skins. The Iroquois saw and envied these furs and the strong waters which they enabled their possessors to buy, so they became more than ever bent on mastering all this

traffic by first conquering the tribes. The Dutch and English urged them on, for the Hurons, Ottawas, and other tribes were the "children" of the French, working in their interests and protected by them, while French and Indians alike were enemies of the Iroquois.

Thus it was no accidental attack that the French had to fear at "Castle Dangerous," but a determined effort by a race that could put nearly three thousand warriors in the field, and that constantly increased this force by adopting captives into the tribes.

The settlement at Castle Dangerous consisted of the blockhouse, a strong building made of timbers; of the house of the Seignior; some rude shacks, and the fort itself, which was connected with the blockhouse by a covered way. All the settlers lived in these

DEFENCE OF CASTLE DANGEROUS

buildings for safety, since their pitiless enemy the Iroquois had always to be guarded against. There were as well bands of wandering Indians that were constantly passing up and down the trail that lay along the St. Lawrence River.

Rude and dangerous as the place seemed, Madelon loved it, since it was home to her. She was brave, and had been trained by her father in the use of firearms, to be cool in the face of danger and quick to meet emergencies.

The morning of the twenty-second of October broke fair, the sun rose amid banks of purple and gold clouds, and as there was still work to be done in the fields, the men of the settlement started off directly after the morning meal, leaving the women and children, two soldiers, one old man of eighty, and Madelon in charge of the fort.

For a long time Verchères had been

unmolested. The settlers had come to feel that perhaps there was not much further danger to be feared from the foe, and with this feeling of fancied security they had grown less vigilant. Madelon, attracted by the beauty of the day, started to go down to the landing-place, which hung over the river and made an admirable spot from which to fish, the river being noted for the excellence and number of fine fish to be found there.

“Come, Laviolette,” she called to a French half-breed who was hired to work about the fort, “bring some lines and perhaps we can catch fish enough to serve for a meal.”

They were busily engaged in this peaceful sport, when suddenly the sound of firing was heard in the neighbourhood of the place where the settlers were at work in the fields.

“Run, Mademoiselle, run! The Iroquois are coming,” screamed Laviolette, and taking her by the hand, they fled towards the fort.

“Can we reach it, dost thou think?”

“Courage, Mademoiselle! we are almost there,” replied Laviolette; and so the Iroquois thought also, since they gave up the chase of the flying girl, and contented themselves with firing at her and her companion. As the bullets whistled by, she prayed aloud, —

“Holy Marie, save us!” and as the words inspired her with fresh courage, she shouted as she neared the fort, —

“Help, help, to arms!” Her wild call was not heard, and at the very gate itself were two sobbing women who from the battlement of the fort had seen their husbands murdered in the field, and stood wringing their hands in misery.

“Oh, come within, come in, think of the children”; and as she spoke, Madelon pushed the two women in before her, and with the aid of Laviolette shut the heavy gate.

“Where are the soldiers?” was her next question.

“Hidden in the blockhouse, sister”; and Louis, the elder of the two boys, came to meet his sister with a gun in his hand. They ran together to the blockhouse, and there, sure enough, were the two men, crazed with fear, and one of them holding in his hand a lighted fuse.

“What do you with that fuse?”

“Light the powder and blow us all up,” cried the soldier, while his companion, huddling in the corner, only moaned.

“Miserable coward, go from this place at once!” and Madelon’s voice

rang with such determination and command that the man obeyed.

“See, since none of you dare, I myself will defend this fort, for my father would have shame if his daughter could not keep it, when there are arms and powder and those that can use them.”

“Sister,” said Alexander, “give me a gun, for I too can load and fire one.”

“Truly thou shalt have one, little brother. We shall fight to the death. Remember what our father hath taught us, that men are born to shed their lives for their country and their king. Though I be but a girl, I shall do as he would wish, since neither of you is old enough to take command here.”

Even the craven soldiers, inspired with some small degree of courage, agreed to follow their intrepid commander, whose first order was that

they should make a round of the palisades, that high fence of great logs with pointed ends that surrounded the forts and blockhouses planted in the wilderness, and to which many owed their safety, since they were well-nigh impossible to climb, and the garrison within had those that climbed at their mercy. As they hurried to the palisades, Madelon put on her head one of the soldier caps which she saw in the blockhouse.

“Why do you put that cap on, sister?” asked Louis, with a curiosity which he could not repress even at that critical time.

“So that the Iroquois shall not think that it is a girl making the rounds. You put one on also, and give one to Alexander.”

The feeble band hurried to go around the inside of the palisades to see that

all was secure, for on this defence of heavy logs their very lives depended.

“Thank the Holy Virgin that we came,” Madelon exclaimed; for they found not one, but half a dozen of the logs gone at different places, and had this been discovered by the Indians, there would have been little chance for the small band to have escaped being slain.

“Help, Louis; push, Alexander! We can get this log into place while the soldiers set up those that have wholly fallen down.” As she spoke, the brave girl and the two little brothers tugged with might and main, and got the heavy log in place, and held it while the soldiers drove it into the ground, so that no opening was left in the palisades. All the other weak spots were mended under her direction, the two men working as she ordered, since

they seemed incapable of taking charge themselves. When the palisades were well repaired, and Madelon thought there was no further danger to be feared from that direction, she said,

“Now must we make the cowardly Iroquois believe that there is a strong garrison within, and never let them think that my father is from home. So let each one in turn fire from the loopholes, and see to it, boys, that there is no shot wasted.”

Finding that the firing was scattering but continuous, the Indians, ever averse to making an attack on a fortified place, withdrew to the woods.

Shortly, however, they discovered some of the settlers who had escaped the morning assault, creeping back to the fort, and with horrid yells the savages pursued and killed them. The women and children in the fort cried

and screamed without ceasing, knowing that their loved ones were being killed without mercy. At last Madelon, fearing that they would be heard by the Indians, and their distress taken as a sign of weakness, ordered them to stop, and tried to busy them about the defence.

“Load and fire the cannon, Laviolette; it will serve as a warning to any of the settlers that may have escaped, and I have heard my father say that Indians ever fear a cannon.”

So the cannon was fired, and Madelon from her loophole saw the tall, painted forms of the enemy take refuge in the forest. But this was not the last duty of the little commander that night. From her place on the bastions of the fort she saw a canoe with a settler whom she knew well, named Fontaine, coming towards the

landing. He was not alone, but had his wife and family with him.

“I must save them if it be the will of God. Laviolette, dost thou see any of the Indians lurking at the woods’ edge?”

“There be none very near at hand, Mademoiselle. Perhaps the cannon affrighted them.”

“I pray that it may be so, since there is none but thou and I to save our friends, I fear.”

“Nay, there are the soldiers. Sure, it is their business to venture to the dock and bring in *Sieur Fontaine*.”

“Listen thou, Laviolette, the while I ask them to do this.”

The soldiers summoned before their little commander, though testifying their willingness to follow all her orders within the palisades, absolutely refused to risk their lives by going beyond its shelter.

“ ’T was as I feared; thou and I must save them, Laviolette. Thou shalt keep guard at the gate, and I will to the landing and bring them hither.”

“ Pray, Mademoiselle, bid me to go, and thou stay and keep the gate.”

“ Nay, for I have heard my father say that the Indian is ever wary about that which he doth not understand. They will marvel why I go alone to the landing, and doubtless think it but a ruse to draw them hither, so that we may train the cannon on them again. If they appear, go thou in and bar the gate, since we must save the fort at any cost, and as many lives as is possible.”

So Madelon, with a bravery that might have put to shame the soldiers skulking within the fort, alone and in full sight, walked down to the landing, assisted Fontaine to take his family

and goods from the canoe, and placing the party in front of her, marched back to the fort entirely unmolested. As she hoped, the Indians, seeing her put so bold a face on the matter, suspected that they had something to fear from the occupants of the fort; so, while they hesitated, Madelon acted. Once within the stronghold, how the little party wept and prayed with joy!

“Now indeed I feel as if there was hope, since thou art here to help me, *Sieur Fontaine*. There are enough so that we may divide the watch, and as long as daylight lasts, to fire on the enemy if ever one is seen to show himself. Thou, *Louis*, and *Alexander* as well, shalt take turns at the loopholes, and see that thy aim go not astray.”

The rest of the day was spent in making all the defences as strong as

possible, in which Fontaine gave valuable assistance, for he was a brave man, accustomed to the wiles of the murderous enemy, and wise in the ways of border warfare.

At sunset a fierce northeast wind began to blow, and the first snow of the season mixed with hail filled the air, making it deadly cold and a night to try the spirits of the small band who were fighting for their lives. At first Madelon hoped that the storm would drive the Indians to shelter for the night, but they were constantly seen appearing at the edge of the woods, and, as it seemed, making preparations for an attack under cover of the darkness, and to gain entrance into the fort that night.

“Go, Louis, and tell all the men that I would speak with them.”

When the whole force was mustered,

there were but six in all, two of them boys and one an old man over eighty. Madelon spoke to them thus, —

“ God has saved us to-day from the hands of our enemies, and let us pray that we shall escape their snares to-night. As for me, know that I am not afraid. See, I will keep the fort with the old man and my brothers, whilst you, Pierre Fontaine, and the two soldiers, La Bonté and Gachet, go into the blockhouse with the women and children, as it is the safest place. If I am taken, do not you surrender, even if the horrible Iroquois cut me to pieces and burn me before your eyes. I am but one, and in the blockhouse they cannot reach you if you care for yourselves as you should. So all to your places, and may God keep us through the night.”

Madelon tramped off to her chosen

place of duty, with the old man and her young brothers.

“Louis,” she said, “choose thou the place on the bastion where thou wilt serve, Alexander shall choose next, then the old man, and I shall take the last.”

Each did as he was bidden, and all night through the wind and storm the two little boys, the aged man whose fires of life had burned so low, and the young girl kept vigil. All night long the cries of “All’s well” rang from bastion to blockhouse, making it appear as if the place was fully manned by a large garrison. At about one o’clock the old man who was on guard at the place on the bastion nearest the gate, called out,—

“Mademoiselle, I hear something, mayhap the enemy.”

His voice quavered with fear and

fatigue, and as Madelon hurried to him she feared the worst had come.

“Where is it that thou hearest something?” asked Madelon, hardly above her breath.

“There, just below, at the gate of the fort.”

“Surely I see them too, and well I know the poor creatures, since for many a day this summer past have I driven them to pasture.”

The snow had whitened the ground, so that Madelon's bright eyes had been able to distinguish that the dark forms huddled at the gate were the poor remnant of the cattle that had not been killed or driven off by the Iroquois. Summoning the others from the blockhouse, they took counsel together as to whether they should open the gate and let the cattle in. The men were all anxious to do

this, but Madelon feared the crafty foe.

“How canst thou tell but what we let in the savages also? Such creatures of wile are they, that we know not if they be not concealed in the hides of the beasts already slaughtered, and if we are simple enough to open the gate they may enter the fort.”

An hour passed, and still the cattle stood there, and there were no signs that the enemy was among them. So at last Madelon called Louis and Alexander.

“Brothers,” she said, “we must get in the cattle if it be possible. You shall stand on either side of the gate and have your guns cocked, while I go forth and drive the beasts in. If the Indians make a rush, shoot, and then shut the gate as quickly as thou canst.”

The heavy gate was swung back, and Madelon stepped out. It did not take

long for her to drive in the few cattle that remained of the generous herd that had gone to pasture that morning.

The remainder of the night passed away without any further alarms, and when darkness disappeared, many of the fears and anxieties of the small garrison disappeared also, as it is always easier to face the fears that may be seen than those that are born of the imagination.

II

WITH the dawning of the second day of the defence of Castle Dangerous, the spirits of all rose, all, that is, except one, and this was Dame Marguerite, the wife of Sieur Fontaine. She, poor soul, had but lately come from Paris, and was yet a stranger to the difficulties and dangers of life in the wilderness.

Her complaints were unceasing, and she gave her husband no rest, constantly imploring him to carry her to another fort. Her selfish thought was for herself alone, and she cried, —

“ Save me, Pierre, save me. Was it to expose me to such horrible danger that you sent for me to come from Paris, where I was safe and happy ? ”

“ I sent for you and our children, that we might all be together and make a home in this new free land. But methinks that perhaps it had been best to let thee remain where thou wast, and where there was nothing to disturb thy ease.”

“ It is in my heart to wish well that I was there again, Pierre, and had never seen this hateful wilderness. Oh, wilt thou not take me to some place of safety ere I die with fright ? ”

“ Peace, woman, and shame me no

further by thy childish plaint, for the very children are more brave than thou. As for Mademoiselle Madelon, she has the courage of a man, though she is but a girl, nor will I ever leave this fort while she is here to defend it."

After this the woman subsided into a peevish quiet, which was at least easier to bear than her complaints. All the others, even those who had lost fathers, husbands, or brothers, put aside their griefs, and united in an effort to compass their common safety. The meals were served out as usual, the work inside the fort progressed as it did each day, since each one felt that the best way to keep grief at bay was to occupy one's self in helping others. During the middle of the afternoon all the people were called together by Madelon, so that their situation could

be discussed. The soldiers, poor creatures, knew not what to counsel, and sought only to stay in the blockhouse, the safest spot. Small account was taken of them, though they were the very ones to whom the others should have looked for protection.

Sieur Fontaine, the old man, and the two boys were of course for staying, and not endeavouring to escape by night down the river. Encouraged by them, Madelon made a little speech to the garrison and the women and children under their charge.

“Dear friends,” said she, “never willingly will I give up the fort. Rather would I die than that the enemy should gain it. Hear what my father said to me, that it was of the greatest importance that the Iroquois should never gain possession of any French fort, since, if they gained one,

soon they would grow more bold, and think they could get others, and after that all safety would be at an end."

"What you say is true enough," said the Sieur Fontaine, rising in his turn to encourage the people. "Nor may any of us complain, if a girl be brave enough to stay on the bastions for a day and a night without rest or repose, and who ever carries before us a cheerful face. I, for one, cry, 'Viva, viva! Long live brave Madelon!'"

"Viva, viva!" they cried, one and all; and the feeble garrison returned to their posts, reanimated and hopeful that relief would come to save them.

For a weary week they were in constant alarm. Each day showed them the enemy lurking about, and each night made them fearful that the attack which had not come during the light would be attempted during the

darkness. But every night dragged itself away at last, and each morning brought, if not the help so eagerly expected, at least courage to wait for it. On the eighth night poor weary Madelon was dozing in the fort, with her head pillowed on a table, and her gun beside her, when she heard the sentinel on watch call, —

“Qui vive?”

She sprang to her feet, and with her gun in her hand ran up on to the bastion.

“Why called you?”

“Listen, Mademoiselle! Dost thou not hear a sound on the river like the splashing of oars?”

“Surely yes; there are voices too. Canst thou tell if they be French or Indian?”

“No; they breathe so low, Mademoiselle.”

Madelon put her hands to her mouth, and called low but clear,—

“Who are you?”

The answer came back in the loved French accents,—

“We are Frenchmen. It is La Monnerie, who comes from down the river to bring you aid.”

The gate was flung open wide, but even yet Madelon's caution did not desert her, for she placed a sentinel on guard, and then alone, as she had gone before, she marched down to the landing-place to meet the soldiers. When she came face to face with Lieutenant La Monnerie, she saluted, and—

“Monsieur,” said she, “I surrender my arms to you.”

Being a gallant Frenchman, and as yet hardly understanding the situation, knowing that there were soldiers within the fort, he answered,—



"I HAVE COMMANDED THIS FORT, MONSIEUR, DURING THE ABSENCE OF MY FATHER."—Page 125.

“Mademoiselle, they are in good hands”; but he smiled as he said it, looking on the girlish form before him, with its soldier cap and heavy gun. Madelon saw the smile, and who can blame her that she answered, —

“In better hands than you think. Will Monsieur come and inspect the fort?”

The Lieutenant and his forty men followed her up to the fort, found everything in order, and a sentinel on each bastion. He turned with a look of surprise to Madelon, and asked, —

“Why does not the commandant of this fort come to receive me?”

“I have commanded this fort, Monsieur, during the absence of my father, since there was none other either willing or able to do it. Will Monsieur give me his orders?”

The surprised lieutenant, after looking again about him, turned and bowed.

“What commands does Mademoiselle wish me to give? For my part, there seems nothing for me to alter.”

“If Monsieur will relieve the garrison, it would be well, since none of us have been off the bastions for a week.”

We can well imagine that there were deep and peaceful slumbers in Castle Dangerous that night, and let us hope that the cowardly soldiers had to take their turn at last at bastion duty. I cannot find in the history that they did, however.

Think of the pride and pleasure that Madelon's father and mother felt in their daughter when the news of her bravery reached them!

What they said to her when she told

them all about it, history does not say either; but the facts of the defence were written down as Madelon herself told them, in obedience to the commands of the Marquis de Beauharnais, Governor of Canada.

Even in those dangerous times, when one never knew what peril the next moment would bring forth, and women as well as men took their share in guarding homes and firesides, such wonderful bravery and determination in a girl of fourteen did not pass unnoticed. Through the efforts of those in power, Madelon was highly commended at the great French court over seas, and was granted a pension by the King, to be paid to her each year as long as she should live.

In another encounter with Indians many years later, she saved the life of

a French gentleman whom she afterward married. All her life was passed in the midst of peril, and on no occasion when bravery was demanded was Madelon ever found wanting.



THE PEARL NECKLACE

1767

I



OOD-BYE," SHE
said.

And then again,
"Good-bye."

The voice of the young girl was choked with sobs, and tears rolled slowly down her cheeks.

"Good-bye, dear garden; good-bye, dear home"; and as she spoke she stopped and looked up at the old grey chateau which the warm afternoon sun had made glow with tints of rose and gold.

She made a pretty picture standing there, even though her eyes were red

with weeping, for her clustering curls were drawn high on her graceful head with a great comb, the lack of powder letting their bright chestnut tones shine in the warm evening light. A gaily flowered gown of simple muslin, less ample in its cut than the style affected by those who lived nearer the court, was fashioned so as to show a slender white throat. The delicate ruffles at elbow and neck showed that even in the country Mechlin, the lace of the hour, had its wearers.

Looking about, eyes even less partial than hers would cease to be surprised that parting with so fair a scene should cause such grief. To Clemence Valvier the chateau was home. There she was born, had grown to girlhood, and though but seventeen was not only a wife, but the mother of a tiny child for whose sake she was preparing to leave

parents, country, home, and friends, and seek that little known land across the sea where so many of her countrymen had gained a footing in the wilderness.

The pointed turrets of the chateau stood out sharply against the deep blue of the afternoon sky, and the glass panes in the small windows sparkled as the late sunbeams rested on them. On one side huge vines of ivy clambered up the rough stones till they reached the roof, and amid their hospitable leaves sheltered many a nest of linnet and of sparrow, whose cheerful songs made music at morning and at sunset.

Clemence stood in the garden looking sadly at the roses whose sweet profusion was due in no small measure to her care. There was the garden seat; here the sun-dial; yonder, above

the wall which bounded the garden, rose the dove-cote, around which constantly hovered some of her feathered pets.

“How can I leave you all!” she cried, as each familiar object rose before her eyes. “My courage wellnigh fails me”; and she sank on her knees before the dial,—a grey veteran which gave no hint of time this afternoon, since it marked only sunny hours, and already the long shadows cast by the chateau fell across its face of stone.

Just at that moment, when she was almost willing to abandon the thought of the long and terrible journey, she heard a footstep on the gravel of the paths.

“Ah, Clemence, dear heart, it grieves me almost past endurance to see your grief. Say but one word, and I will go forth alone, and shall send back for

you and the little one when a home is made ready and when I have some comforts for you."

At the first sound of her husband's voice Clemence had jumped to her feet, and running to him had laid her tear-stained face upon his shoulder. As he finished speaking, she had almost brought a smile to drive away the tears, and looking into his face she bravely made answer,—

"If it wrings my heart to leave dear France, Pierre, it would be a thousand times worse to have you go and leave me here, me and little Annette, for whose sake we undertake all these perils."

"If I could think that this was really so"; and Pierre, scarce more than a youth himself, as he yet wanted several months of seeing twenty years, bore on his face a gravity that is rarely seen on

one so young. His dark eyes were sad, and though he smiled when he comforted his youthful wife, it seemed as though it was but to cheer her. In truth, all his life he had comforted and protected her, for Pierre Valvier, like Clemence, had called the old chateau, the rose garden, the long straight terrace, and the fertile fields his home.

Left an orphan at an early age, under the guardianship of Monsieur Bienville, the father of Clemence, the two children had played together, studied together, and finally were wedded, and now were preparing to go forth to the New World together.

At this time Louis XV sat upon the throne of France. He was a weak monarch, devoted to his pleasures, and content to let his ministers rule, although he always took an active part

in all the religious quarrels which disturbed and agitated France. Jealousy, which had long been smouldering between France and England on account of the various colonies in America to which each country laid claim, broke out into war in 1756, and its effects were felt over the whole world.

The brilliant victory of Admiral Galissonière at Fort St. Philip, the chief citadel of Port Mahon on the Minorca Islands, the most important naval victory which France had gained in fifty years, filled the whole French nation with joy. Yet the succeeding years brought little but ignominy and defeat, and The Seven Years War, as this struggle was ultimately called, lost France not only the greater part of her navy, but, what was even more galling, many of her possessions in the New World.

Disapproval of the King and his ministers drove to what was left of these colonies in America many Frenchmen of high character who foresaw nothing but disaster left for France herself. Among these was Pierre Valvier, who sought for himself and his little family a home in that new country where liberty of person and creed was assured. They were to start on the morrow for Calais, and thence take ship for New Orleans.

The old chateau — old even in 1756 — stood upon a gentle slope looking down upon the little fishing village of Étapes. Such a tiny village it was, with its one-story huts, — you could scarcely call them more, — set upon the banks of the Canache, a broad shallow river so influenced by the ocean that when the tide was low the fisher-girls kilted up their scant skirts and waded

across with their baskets of shrimps upon their strong young shoulders.

Such a little village, and so poor!

“Petit sou, petit sou, donnez-moi un petit sou!” That was the cry heard on every side. There was hardly a hand in the hamlet which would not be held out in expectation of a small copper coin, should anyone from the chateau chance to pass through its one ill-paved street.

Every year the poverty seemed to increase. Every year the revenues of the chateau grew less, — which was but another reason why Pierre, young and strong, should seek a home where those of gentle birth were made welcome, and where the Crown gave broad acres of land to each and all who would go and settle there.

Still, even with Hope and Courage beckoning, the parting was sad for all.

Monsieur Bienville, the father of Clemence, was a soldier of the old régime. Tall, elegant, with the true air of grandeur which is born, not bred, he watched with sad eyes the preparations for departure. Madame his wife could not suppress her grief, and declared that never, never again should she see her loved ones.

“Ah,” cried she, “the poor children will be devoured by frightful beasts, I know it well,—if not by those that roam on land, by those more awful ones which dwell in the sea!”

The distant land was to her a wilderness, a desert; and, in truth, a few miles away from the city of New Orleans it was little else.

II

THE rain was falling heavily as the old travelling carriage, drawn by four horses, lumbered up to the door of the chateau the next morning. Into it had been packed the necessaries for the journey to Calais, and two heavy wains had been sent off some days previously, laden with such goods as the young people were to take with them to the New World.

Within doors the daughter was taking leave of her parents, and as if to shorten the sad moment, her father took her hand, and placed within it a packet carefully bound in silk.

“Dear daughter,” said he, “see that this packet is carefully guarded. In it is thy heritage, the pearl necklace which my mother had from her

mother, and which in its turn must go to thy daughter, the little Annette."

"Oh, father, why give to me that most precious thing? Safeguard it till we come again, as, if God is willing, we shall."

"It is yours, and then the daughter's, and," he whispered in her ear, "I have added all the jewels which were my mother's portion. Keep them till time of need."

The impatient stamping of the horses on the cobblestones of the court, warned them all that they must part, and Pierre led Clemence to the carriage, where little Annette was sleeping on the broad lap of old Marie, who had petted and scolded her mother through her babyhood and was now going with her on that long journey to the land of which they knew so little and feared so much.

As if desirous of making up for lost time, Jacques cracked his whip, and with the words, "Farewell, farewell," ringing in the air, the coach passed quickly down the long drive and through the gates leading to the high-road, and turned in the direction of Boulogne, where they were to pass that night.

The familiar scenes of her childhood never seemed so fair to Clemence as at this moment when she was parting from them. Here was the little church nestling among the trees, where she had received her first communion, and there stood Père Joseph, waving adieux from the old grey porch, the unfamiliar tear stealing down his wrinkled cheek.

Farther along on the other side of the road was the Rose d'Or, the quaint old inn, before whose hospitable door

the village yokels were wont to gather of a summer's evening and play at bowls upon the green. The very sign-board as it hung above the door and swung in the wind seemed to creak "farewell," and as the travelling chariot rolled by, Clemence hid her face upon her husband's shoulder.

At last her sobs grew less violent, and as if to call attention from her grief, little Annette awoke, and lying comfortable and rosy upon the lap of her nurse, cooed out her satisfaction as only a healthy, happy baby can. Pierre took the child in his arms, and the baby stretched out her hands towards her mother, who, turning to take her, found neglected in her own lap the parcel of jewels so carefully wrapped and handed to her by her father as a parting gift.

"See, Pierre, my father gave to me

the pearl necklace which I wore on my wedding day, and it is to be the portion of little Annette, when she too marries.”

Hardly had the words passed her lips, when rude shouts were heard, and the coach gradually came to a standstill.

“Halt!” cried a voice almost beside the window, and old Jacques the coachman could be heard saying,—

“But, messieurs, my master and mistress —”

“Peace, knave, let thy betters speak for themselves.”

At this a rude leering face was thrust into the window, and a man pulled roughly at the carriage door and cried,—

“Step out, and quickly too, and bring out your valuables with you.”

“But we are travellers, and have with us barely enough to carry us to

Calais, where our ship lies at anchor," said Pierre, trying not to let his voice show his anger and disgust.

"What will serve you will serve us also at a pinch. Is it not so, Jean?" and he turned to a third ruffian who stood at hand, holding by the bridle some sorry-looking horses.

"Truth, if we take all they have, 't will be enough, but do not wait too long," answered the one named Jean, who wore a soldier's cap with a soiled and broken feather trailing over one ear.

At the first appearance of the highwaymen at the carriage window, Clemence had handed little Annette to Marie, and in so doing had managed to slip among her clothes the precious packet of jewels. She gave Marie a warning look, and when they were commanded to step from the coach,

she begged, for the sake of the child, that it and the nurse might sit within.

“You can see for yourselves that neither the infant nor the aged woman has aught of value,” said she.

After hurriedly searching through the coach and finding nothing more, the highwaymen contented themselves with carrying off Pierre’s sword and a fair pearl ring which Clemence wore upon her finger, and a small bag of golden doubloons which Pierre had in the pocket of his travelling coat. The villainous trio had scarcely got safely away, when the reason of their haste became apparent, for a captain and four men-at-arms came around a turn in the road, urging their horses to a smart trot, when they saw the travelling carriage drawn up by the side of the ditch.

“Have three renegadoes passed this

way?" called the leader, as they drew rein.

"Truly, but a few moments since," said Pierre, with a rueful face, as he thought of his bag of gold. "It would have pleased me much had you come this way but a few moments earlier, since I then had been the richer for a purse of doubloons."

"Stole they aught beside?" asked the captain, as he put spurs to his horse and hardly waited for Pierre's answer as they rode hastily away in the direction the robbers had taken.

When once more the coach was in motion, Clemence turned to Annette and clasped her in her arms, saying, —

"Of a truth, little one, 'twas fortunate indeed that you saved your inheritance this time, — you and Marie."

"Let us hide the packet better, Madame," said Marie. "Who can tell

when another band of cutthroats may be upon us, and truly, as thou saidst, it was but chance that saved us this time.”

Without any delay the packet was carefully tied among the long skirts of little Annette, and Marie hardly ceased to tremble till the coach rolled into the yard of the inn at Boulogne, and the red light streaming from the open door showed them that warmth and shelter were to be had within.

Early astir the next morning, refreshed and cheered because the rain had ceased and the sun shone cheerfully abroad, our travellers during the late afternoon of the next day entered the grey old town of Calais, the little Annette unconsciously guarding the packet which held her inheritance as well as the jewels which Monsieur Bienville had given as a parting token to his daughter.

It was quite dark when the carriage was at last unpacked, and not till then did Pierre draw from behind a secret panel in the side of the coach the store of gold which was to suffice for their needs on board ship, and till they were established in the new home which awaited them on the other side of the ocean.

III

IN the harbour of Calais rode at anchor the ship "Espérance," which was taking on passengers and their goods for the long voyage to New Orleans. Owing to the shallow water, the ship could not approach the quay, and all the watermen of the town were busy carrying back and forth those who, like our travellers, were outward bound, or those who came merely to say a last farewell.

On the walls of the town were gathered a motley crew, who, not having friends on board, sought to gain some excitement by watching the partings of others; and as from time to time the chimes rang out from the belfry behind the citadel, the little craft in the harbour became even more animated, since they now carried out to the "Es-pérance" some who had been belated on their way thither, and sought to get themselves and their goods safely aboard before the turn of the tide should serve to carry the ship out through the Straits into the English Channel.

Watching this scene from the cramped deck of the ship, Clemence and Pierre stood together, the former giving free vent to her tears, which rolled unheeded down her cheeks at the thought that she was leaving be-

hind her so much which had hitherto made her life joyful.

Her sadness was reflected in her husband's face, and at last he spoke.

“Dear wife, 'tis not yet too late to return. Say one word, and I can call one of those dingeys which shall carry us back to shore.”

“Nay, Pierre, I would go with you. But indeed I must weep, since never again do these eyes expect to look on my beautiful France.”

“I pray your sacrifice may not cost too dear,” said Pierre, pressing her hand; and as she wept she whispered, —

“The grief I feel at parting from France is naught compared to what I should feel at parting from you.”

Even as she spoke, there began such a scene of bustle and confusion that Clemence perforce dried her eyes to

gaze upon it. The sailors were running to and fro stowing the goods of passengers away, and piled on the deck were feather-beds and pallets of straw, each passenger providing such beds and covering as his station in life permitted, since the ship provided only the room in which these might be laid. Boatloads of people were leaving the ship, some merry, some grave, and above all the noise rose the sharp commands of the Captain. At last sounded the shrill notes of the boatswain's whistle, and the crew began to man the capstan bars. One of the sailors commenced to sing to ease the labour off a bit, and at the sound of the well-known chorus,

“Ho, ho, batelier, batelier,
Tirez, tirez,
Ancre de flot,
Tirez Roget, tirez Notet,”

the crew joined in, so that the bars worked like magic, and the anchor rose into sight, then came short up, and finally, with another drive of the bars, swung all wet and dripping at the bows.

Ere this the huge sails had been bent into place, and now with the fresh evening breeze began to draw, while from every side came the curious creak and tugging noise which is present in every sailing craft. 'T was not many moments ere the "Espérance" had her nose pointed seaward, and was bowling along with the white foam flying in her wake. All too quickly the shores and buildings of the town receded from the sight of those who gazed on them with tears, and even the belfry chimes had a melancholy sound as they floated out over the water.

Pierre and Clemence stood by the rail, rather apart from the other passengers, and when the purple twilight had swallowed up France, Pierre said, —

“See, Clemence, a good omen. Look at the new moon.”

“It is a happy sign, and glad am I to see it. How silvery it looks, and see the horn dips not at all, which argues well for a smooth voyage.”

Though the “Espérance” was not a swift craft, she was a steady one. There were three weary months spent on board of her, and the moon proved a false prophet, since they encountered storms and head winds, and in addition had the alarm of pirates and the heat of the tropics. Worse even than the perils of the Atlantic were those encountered when they entered the Gulf of Mexico, where also pirates lay in

wait, where there were contrary currents, and worse than all, sandbars, upon which the ship grounded. Many manœuvres were tried to ease her off, and there was despair felt on all sides when it was ordered that the baggage should be thrown overboard. Fortunately this sacrifice became unnecessary, as the second high-tide floated her off, and slowly the "Espérance" glided into deeper water. Pierre and Clemence heard with joy the rattle of the chain as the anchor was thrown overboard in the harbour of the Belize, thinking, poor souls, that the sufferings of the journey were over. Clemence turned with a bright smile to poor Marie, who sat upon a pile of bedding which lay on the deck, where it had been thrown in order to be ready for departure from the ship. The old nurse had suffered greatly during the

long, tedious journey, and even now she looked sad and worn as she sat there in the sunshine, holding little Annette on her knees.

“Come, Marie, look less sad; soon will we reach the spot where our home is to be. Let me hold the little one.”

“Oh, Madame, little did I know of the horrors before us! Praise God that we still live, we and the little cat.”

“Truly the little cat and Annette seem to have fared better than the rest of us,” said Clemence, laughing. “Let us hope there will be fewer mice than you expect.”

“But, Madame, a cat is so comfortable, and in this wild land there be few enough comforts, I well know.”

Just at this moment Pierre hurried up to them, and said, —

“Come, Clemence, bring Annette,

while Marie helps me, for the Captain says we are to go ashore and wait at the house of the Commandant till boats come for us from New Orleans."

It was with scant ceremony that our little party and some of the other passengers were packed into the ship's boats and taken to Dauphin Island. Here they were made comfortable, and during the week of their stay recovered somewhat from the sufferings on shipboard.

It was in two pirogues and two barges that they at last started on the trip up the river to New Orleans, and for discomfort the seven days passed in this journey far outdid all the fatigues sustained in the "Espérance."

"Oh, Madame," said Marie, "who ever saw 'Messieurs les Maringouins' of such size and with such stings before?" and as she spoke she waved

again the huge fan with which she tried to protect Annette from the ravages of the mosquitoes.

An hour before sunset the rowers stopped each day, and the whole party encamped on shore, so as to get safely tucked in beneath the mosquito bars before "les Messieurs" should begin operations.

If the nights were dreadful, the days were scarcely better, since the boats were piled high with goods, so that the passengers were cramped in narrow spaces and hardly dared to move. In fact, the little cat in its wicker basket, and Annette carried on the broad breast of Marie, were the most comfortable members of the party. They had no fears of going to feed the fishes, as had some of their elders.

At length the weary trip was over,

and when at length the boats drew up at the landing much of the discomfort was forgotten.

The Crescent City lay before them, the white-walled houses gleaming in the sunshine, while the bells of the Ursuline Convent pealed a welcome, and there burned before the chapel of "Our Lady of Prompt Succour" votive candles, to commemorate the safe arrival of another band of travellers from the distant land which every one in his heart called "home."

"Pierre," cried Clemence, surprise showing in every tone of her clear voice, "but what a beautiful city! And oh, Pierre, behold the lovely ladies! Scarce ever in my life have I seen such brave apparel."

Her eyes were fixed, as she spoke, on a group which came idly down towards the landing, the ladies elegant in robes

of damask silk loaded with lace and ribbons, while beside them lounged officers in rich court suits, both men and women wearing powdered hair and having their faces decorated with black patches.

Louisiana was passing through an interesting period of its growth, a changing from the pioneer days when the young officers from Canadian forts came down and made things lively with their merry pranks and boyish larks, their ceremonies and festivals. The Marquis de Vaudreuil was governor now, and brought with him the elegances and dignity which he had learned in years of life at the French court. The French and Swiss officers, but newly arrived, bore also the stamp of continental training; and the house of the Marquis, reflecting as well as might be the elegance of Versailles,

was the centre of all that was most refined in the city.

Tradition chatters yet of the gracious manners of the Marquis, and there are still drawn from chests and carved presses robes which once figured at his balls, when court dress was the only wear. Though these gowns are now faded and tarnished, in the time when they were first worn they flaunted brilliant flowers on a ground of gold. The yellow bits of lace at elbow and corsage are frail now as a spider's web, but then they were the latest patterns from Alençon and Flanders, and fit companions for the jewels which sparkled amongst them.

It was at this time, when New Orleans boasted the greatest beauty and elegance of any city in the New World, that our little family landed on its quay.

It is hard to conceive that while within the limits of the city there flowed such gay life as that seen in the Governor's mansion, without, and but a few miles away, were untrod wildernesses.

But so it was.

Pierre and Clemence rested but a few days before they sought out the plantation where they so fondly hoped to raise a home and enjoy the fruits of the rich country which they had chosen as their own.

The roads were poor, horses high in price and not at all plenty, so that Pierre bought some pirogues, a species of small boat, to take them and their goods the twenty miles up the Bayou Gentilly, to where their plantation lay.

Poor Clemence, how gloomy looked the cypress swamps which stretched away on either hand as the heavily

laden boats moved slowly along! Strange and unfamiliar were the long curtains of grey moss which swung back and forth from the branches of the trees, seeming to wave in a ghostly fashion even when there was no wind, and creeping up to the tops of the tallest trees in its silent fashion, but ever turning aside from the bunches of mistletoe which stood out, great rosettes of bright green where all else seemed marked for decay.

Even the brilliant-hued birds which flitted cheerfully from one twig to another, and sang from time to time, did not cheer her, for they seemed so unfamiliar, her mind clinging more to those modest-coated friends, the linnets and finches, which she had fed in the rose garden at the chateau at Étapes.

Ever anxious to cheer her, Pierre said at last, —

THE PEARL NECKLACE

“Sing, dearest Clemence. It seems so long since I heard your voice.”

“How can I sing when my heart is sad?” But even as she spoke she was sorry, since she knew that the good spirits of the little party depended largely on herself.

“What shall I sing, Pierre?” she asked, after a moment’s pause, and then, as if it had been on the tip of her tongue all the while, began, —

“Chante, rossignol, chante,
Toi qu’as le cœur tant gai.

“Pour moi, je ne l’ai guère,
Mon amant m’a quittée,

“Pour un bouton de rose
Que trop tôt j’ai donné.

“Je voudrais que la rose
Fût encore au rosier ;

“Et que la rosier même
Fût encore a planter ;

DEEDS OF DARING

“ Et que mon ami Pierre
Fût encore a m'aimer.

“ Tra la la, la la lere,
Tra la lere, de la ri ra.”

No doubt it was the mocking-bird's song which rang from the trees which brought to the mind of Clemence this song, which had been a favourite of theirs at home, and which told so musically of the nightingale's song, of the red of the rose, and of the love of “ Pierre.”

In five minutes the scene seemed to change from gloom to gaiety. Annette was cooing, Marie kept time to the gay little tune with the great fan which seldom left her hand, while the little cat in her efforts to gain her freedom tipped over her basket and set them all laughing.

The Bayou Gentilly, up which they

were travelling in the pirogues, which were hardly more than dug-out canoes, was bordered at intervals on either side by the plantations of settlers who had owned the land for fifty years and over in some cases.

“Why, Pierre, how is this?” said Clemence, breaking off her song; “first the wilderness, then, see, the fields are planted!”

“These plantations are worked by the order of the King,” answered Pierre, “and the little shrubs with berries which have such fresh green leaves are the myrtle-wax bushes, from which wax for candles is made. We ourselves will have our plantation bordering on the Bayou set with such bushes as these; it is so directed.”

“But I thought indigo and sugarcane were what we were to plant. I know that I could not bring half the

things I wished, lest there should not be room for the indigo seeds and the little canes.”

Pierre smiled and said, —

“Truly a house, dear girl, is the first thing to be considered, and that may best be obtained by a good crop of indigo seed, since the planters hereabouts must needs get their seed from France, unless some are willing to raise seed only.”

On the forenoon of the second day the boats drew up to the shore, and Pierre, anxious, but looking cheerful, said, —

“Welcome to your new home, Clemence. Give me the little Annette, Marie, since she, with her mother, must be the first to step on shore.”

“Home, say you, Pierre?” and Clemence laughed, and looked ruefully, too, at the little log-cabin which had been

hastily built by the negroes sent on in advance by Pierre.

“Patience but for a little while, and in place of that rude home you shall see a house as fair as any in these plantations.”

Laughing like two children, the young parents hastened to touch to the ground one of Annette’s tiny feet cased in its sandal, and as Monsieur Valvier handed the child back to its mother, he said,—

“What is that which makes the child’s garments so stiff?”

A warning glance from Clemence and a smothered exclamation from Marie made him remember that it was the precious packet with the pearl necklace and jewels, of which the little girl was still the unconscious custodian.

In New Orleans, indeed, they had been forced to draw on the packet,

since it was necessary to have slaves to help them build and plant, and though there were frequent importations of them from Africa, the value of one working slave was equal to a thousand dollars of our money, and while it was generally paid in rice, Pierre, a new-comer, was obliged to pay in money. In order to do this, and also buy the precious seed which was so necessary, his own store was more than exhausted, and but for the packet so thoughtfully provided by Monsieur Bienville they would have been obliged to start out ill provided.

IV

ALTHOUGH the log-cabin was far different from the old chateau, and the garden planted with indigo and young sugar-canes a great contrast to

the rose garden with its sun-dial at Étapes, the young couple were not unhappy, and little Annette grew apace.

The only person who took the change sadly to heart was old Marie, and her love for her mistress and the little one was all that kept her alive.

The fertile soil, so rich on the shores of the Bayou that it was fairly black, was soon heavily planted. There were rice fields in addition to those of indigo and sugar-cane, and for the home were planted watermelons, potatoes, peas, and beans; figs and bananas as well as pumpkins were abundant, and there were wild grapes and pecans to be had for the gathering.

With a gun the larder could be kept supplied with ducks, geese, wild swan, venison, pheasants, and partridges, and, most curious of all, wild beef, for un-

branded cattle were considered common property, and many of them escaped from the ranges and roamed the forests in increasing companies.

The second year the plantation showed the results of Monsieur Valvier's unceasing care, and he carried to New Orleans a crop of indigo seed which exceeded by many bushels his greatest hopes.

As the slaves pushed off from the landing, Pierre, standing in the stern of the boat, called out, —

“What shall I bring thee back, Clemence?”

“Whatever you think I shall like best,” she answered, waving her hand in farewell.

“What for the little daughter?” and as if she had only been waiting for the chance, Annette called out gaily, —

“Dolly.”

“How shall I get a dolly? Would you not rather have something else, a toy or a new frock?”

“No, papa, a dolly”; and Annette pressed in her arms the bit of stick enveloped in a piece of gay calico which served her as a substitute for the dearest of all toys.

Two days later, when the little girl was helping her mother to gather the wax berries from the twigs, so that the yearly supply of candles might be made, they heard from the Bayou the cheerful song of the negroes as they rowed homeward.

“Come, mamma, oh, come and see my dolly”; and Annette ran away, while her mother followed more slowly, talking to old Marie, who was carrying in her arms a young Pierre, Annette’s little brother, who had been born since they had lived in the new home.

With a pleased face Monsieur Valvier leaped ashore, hardly waiting for the boat to reach the landing. In his arms he held two parcels carefully wrapped in silver paper.

“Now, mamma shall guess first what is in her parcel,” he said; but Annette could not wait for that, and stood close at his side, saying over softly to herself, —

“My dolly, my pretty, pretty dolly.”

“Give Annette hers first,” said Madame Valvier; “it will take me much time to guess what my parcel contains.”

Annette sat soberly down and brought forth from many wrappings a beautiful doll, with red cheeks and blue eyes, dressed like a court lady, and newly come from France, as her father explained.

“She is most too beautiful to love,”

exclaimed the little girl, as she gently held the gay lady; and the father and mother could only smile at the serious face of the child as she regarded the doll she had so fondly desired.

“Now look at your gift, dear wife. I hope it will please you as much as Annette’s pleases her”; and Monsieur Valvier put into his wife’s hands the second packet. With almost as much excitement as Annette, her mother unrolled her gift, and exclaimed with pleasure at the length of shining silk which greeted her delighted eyes.

“Oh, but, Pierre,” she began; but he stopped her with, —

“Yes, I know what you would say, silks and a log-cabin. But I have good news. The indigo seed brought such a high price that I have bought all that was needful for a house, and

already it is loaded on barges and on its way hither.”

“Good news, indeed, that is. Marie, did you hear that we are to have a house at last? Who knows, perhaps it may be ready for the little Pierre’s christening.”

The parish in which lay the Valviers’ plantation also contained the homes of several other planters. These were either earlier settlers or blessed with greater riches than the Valviers, and their plantations were dignified with dwellings which seemed commodious enough in those days, simple as they would appear in our eyes now.

The planters’ homes were often built in what was called the “Italian style,” with pillars supporting the galleries, which were in reality roomy piazzas. The houses were surrounded by gardens of gorgeous flowering plants, and

approached by avenues of wild orange trees.

It was such a house which soon rose on the bank of the Bayou Gentilly, among the trees which flourished in that teeming soil, and the rude cabin was moved into the background to serve as the quarters for the slaves. Nor were there gaieties wanting, for the planters visited among their neighbours, the ladies coming in huge lumbering coaches drawn by many horses, or by pirogue, while the men almost always rode, the saddle-horse for the master being almost a necessity.

The succeeding years passed quickly, if not too prosperously, and tobacco was added to the productions of the Valvier plantation. Pierre had made himself honoured and respected among the men in his own and the neighbouring parishes, and his ardent love for

France kept him ever a Frenchman, even though his home lay across the sea.

Annette was by this time eight years old, quite a little mother, as Clemence fondly called her, since, grave beyond her years, she looked out for the little brothers and sister who had been born at the Bayou Gentilly. Poor Marie had died, a victim to an attack of the fever which hangs like a dark pall over that enchanting region, and more care had fallen on the shoulders of little Annette than really belonged there. She saw not only to the welfare of the children, but ruled the blacks and looked after the house in a fashion which astonished her mother, whose health had sadly failed, and upon whose natural energy the relaxing climate had laid its enervating spell. The French thrift which is so marked

a quality in the women of that nation seemed to have passed by the mother and bloomed in the nature of the daughter, and Annette's efforts were all which kept the home from being better than a cabin, left to the mercies of the negligent slaves.

V

THERE was one thing for which Annette's mother never lacked strength or energy, and that was the celebration of the birthdays — “fête days,” she called them — of the little family. There was always some little gift forthcoming, were it only a basket of fine figs or a garland of flowers; and for Annette particularly her mother always made an extra effort.

The birthday of the little girl fell in June, that month when all the world

is dressed in flowers, and when the sky above seems to bend its bluest arch. On this occasion Annette was to have a party, her very first, and all the children from the neighbouring plantations had been bidden; and papa had made a special trip to New Orleans and come home with some wonderful and mysterious packages, which had been quickly hidden away. At last the day arrived, and Annette felt it to be the happiest one she had ever known.

“To be nine years old and to have a party! Just think of that, Auguste!” she cried, as she helped the little boy to dress.

Auguste was thinking of it with so much glee that it made the dressing of him more than usually difficult, and Annette turned to little Pierre; but his whole attention was given to “keeping a secret,” for mamma had said that

Annette was not to know what her present was to be till they were all gathered at the table for breakfast.

But he knew, did little Pierre, and it was a hard burden not to tell sister Annette. At last the little ones were ready, and Annette had seen that the simple fare which formed the breakfast — fruit and hominy, with coffee for the father and mother — was on the table.

Such a clamour as arose.

“Oh, mother, let me tell.”

“No, let me.”

“Oh, sister Annette —” But they got no further, for Annette herself pulled the cover off a big box which was laid on her chair, and there within lay a white dress — oh, such a pretty one! — and a little pair of slippers, with long, narrow ribbons to lace them criss-cross about the ankles, and, most lovely of

all, a long blue sash, which had on its two ends a fringe of gold.

“Oh, dearest mother,” cried Annette, “was there ever anything so lovely; and the little brodequins,” pointing to the little slippers, “and a fan! Oh, mother, and you, too, father, how can I thank you both enough?”

Her father kissed her fondly and said, —

“My little daughter repays me every day.”

The mother was well contented with Annette’s pleasure for all the pains she had taken.

“And, sister Annette, see, I gave you the fan.”

“And oh, sister, look at the pretty mouchoir; that is from me.”

And the happy Annette kissed and thanked, and they were all so pleased that breakfast was quite forgotten and

would have grown cold if black Mimi had not put her head in at the door to remind them of it.

When Annette had put on the new birthday dress, laced the slippers around her slender ankles, and held the fan and kerchief, she ran into her mother's room to show her the effect.

"See, mamma, it just fits me"; and she gave the small skirts a toss and a pat, while her mother turned from the table where she had been standing with a small casket in her hand.

"Dearest Annette," said she, in quite a solemn voice, "I shall let you wear to-day what my father gave to me, saying that one day it was to be thine. When you are grown to be a big girl, it shall be yours to have always, but to-day you shall wear it because you are my good child, and I love you fondly."

As Madame Valvier spoke, she clasped

about Annette's neck the pearl necklace, the only remnant of the packet of jewels which had come from France, and which had been drawn on when crops failed, or for the purchase of slaves, or for some of the many needs in a new country where money is scarce.

“ Oh, mamma! ” and Annette's voice was low with pleasure as she gently touched the rows of shining pearls which seemed far too costly a jewel for the neck of a little girl, and quite out of place over the modest frock.

“ Are these really for me some day? Did grandpère say it should be so? ” and Annette listened while her mother told her of her grandfather's injunction, and how old Marie had hidden them in Annette's own clothes and saved them from the highwaymen.

The time passed quickly before the

little guests began to arrive, for it was to be an afternoon party, and some were brought by boat on the Bayou, while others rode on pillions behind black Philippe or Jean, as the case might be, sitting very still so that the best frocks would not be ruffled.

Many games they played in the long, cool galleries, or on the grass before the house. Ball was one of them, and when they were tired of this they played at hide-and-seek, finding many good and secret nooks among the trees and wax-myrtle shrubs, which were so bushy and so green.

“What shall we play next?” asked Annette, anxious that her guests should have a good time, and some one suggested “Hugh, Sweet Hugh,” that game of many verses which has been played by high and low through so many centuries and in all countries.

The children made a pretty sight as, circling in a ring, they sang merrily, —

“Come up, sweet Hugh, come up, dear Hugh,
Come up and get the ball.”

“I will not come, I may not come,
Without my bonny boys all.”

Even after the tragic death of Sweet Hugh their voices rang out clearly till the last verse, —

“And all the bells of merry France
Without men’s hands were rung;
And all the books of merry France
Were read without men’s tongue.
Never was such a burial
Since Adam’s days begun.”

Then, half frightened at their own game, they scampered into the house, where Madame Valvier was awaiting them, and where, spread on trestle-boards, were all the dainties so loved of children, — fresh figs with cream, sweet chocolate, little cakes made of

nuts and honey, and right in the centre a great round birthday cake with a dove on the very top.

At this last touch Annette was as much surprised as the other children, and in answer to her wondering look her mother said, —

“Your father brought it from New Orleans; it is his gift to you.”

After it had been admired, Annette cut the first piece, and the merry meal seemed over all too quickly for the children who had to take their way homewards, reluctant to have an end put to such unusual festivities, and not half aware of the necessity of being safe in their own homes before nightfall.

When the last one had gone, Annette took off her unaccustomed finery, and, holding in her hands the splendid necklace, looked with wonder on the round globes of pearls, which showed on their

satiny faces the shifting tones of rose, blue, pale green, and yellow.

“ Ah, mother,” she sighed, “ to think that so beautiful a thing should be mine! ”

“ Remember always, little daughter, that it was first my mother’s portion, then mine, and shall be yours, never to part with.”

“ Of a truth, dear mother, I should wish to keep it always. But,” and here she hesitated, “ you know the other jewels which grandpère gave have all gone.”

“ Those were my own, but this is different, and should be kept always, except in case of gravest need.”

“ Gravest need — what is that, mamma?” and Annette’s blue eyes looked up solemnly into her mother’s face.

“ Does it mean to save a life, mamma? ”

Madame Valvier, hardly appreciating the earnest little soul which was listening to her words, answered, —

“Yes, to save life or honour. Now, put it in its box, and come with me till I show you where it is hidden.”

In a small room where the children kept their few playthings, some rude toys and some bright shells and beans, Madame Valvier paused, and, stooping, took from beneath the window a small board, which disclosed a box-like cupboard lined with lead.

“Here it is kept with the rest of our treasures, Annette, the papers which belong to your father and the grants of our land. I show this place to you because you have a wisdom beyond your years, and are indeed my little comfort.”

Annette's face grew rosy with pleasure at these words, and holding her mother's hand, she whispered, —

“I love you truly, dearest mamma, and I am the happiest girl in the world.”

When the little ones were in bed, Annette crept up on her father's lap and had the crowning joy of the day, a long story of his childhood's days in France; and she listened entranced, as she had hundreds of times before, to his descriptions of the old grey chateau at Étapes, the rose garden with its sun-dial, and, best of all, to the tales of how he and her mother used to scull down the broad shallow Canache, and then at the river's mouth search among the rocks and seaweed for shrimps, while out at sea the big ships went sailing past, with their white or brown sails swelling with the fresh wind.

Even with the interest she felt in the story, poor Annette, tired with so much

pleasure, nestled lower and lower in her father's arms, and finally her head fell on his shoulder.

"She sleeps," he said, "poor little girl, fairly tired out with too much happiness"; and taking her in his strong arms, he carried her off to her room, where she was soon settled in her bed, the process of undressing hardly waking her.

VI

WITH each succeeding year there were more and more settlers coming to the flowery land of Louisiana. If they had flocked thither in the time of the Regent, that clever and witty intriguer, they came more eagerly during the reign of Louis XV, so shallow a king that it is hard to conceive how he won the name of "The Well-beloved."

It was a strange company which made up the population of the Crescent City, not only those from Paris with their elegances and velvet coats, beneath which beat such loyal hearts, but rubbing shoulders with them in street and café were many of far rougher exterior, who had come down from the settlements in Canada, and learned to adore the little city which was so different from the homes which they had left in the cold North.

Yet each and every one of these, marquis from France or pioneer from Canada, or even the sad-faced Acadian refugee who had been welcomed to these hospitable shores, had a heart which beat for France alone.

With but the least assistance they would have swept the Gulf and made themselves masters of that inland sea, and not only held the possessions of

the mother country on land, but added to them.

Frenchmen in language and in their hearts, they put up with the expulsion of their beloved Ursuline sisters, since the mother country so willed it, only allowing themselves the liberty of giving vent to their feelings by indulging in an unlimited number of satirical songs, burlesques, and pasquinades, as they were called. Little did they know, as they trod the white streets of the city, the deadly blow to those same stout hearts which France was plotting,—France, whom they loved so fondly and in whom they trusted so implicitly.

Completely dominated by his prime minister, Choiseul, Louis XV followed where this ugly, brilliant, inconstant man led, and trafficked first with Austria and then with Spain, till in 1761

Choiseul put in shape his famous "Pacte de Famille," which united all the royalties of Bourbon blood and which formed into one great band the thrones of France, Spain, Turin, Naples, and Sicily.

Although Choiseul had the audacity to frame this agreement, and Louis XV had the folly to sign it, they did not have the courage to proclaim it, and so it remained a secret for several years.

It was not till October, 1764, that the news arrived at New Orleans that Louisiana had, by secret treaty, been ceded to Spain, and instructions were sent to Monsieur D'Abadie, the Governor, to hand over to the envoy of Spain, who would shortly arrive, the whole colony and its possessions.

The blow was stunning!

At first it could not be credited. To

be tossed like a plaything from France to Spain, that cowardly Spain who had never assisted them in any way, who had not even fought to get them, whom they had outwitted and overmatched in every contest, — this was too much!

Not many hours elapsed before the city was in a ferment. Groups gathered on the street corners and loudly denounced the proceedings. The wine-shops held excited bands who declaimed in passionate language against both king and country that could treat a colony in such fashion, and the chorus which rose and swelled protested that it could not be borne.

Swift pirogues carried the news among the plantations which lay along the Bayous, while men on horseback went to those in the interior.

Meetings were called in the parishes

first, and then a convention was planned in New Orleans itself, to which every parish in the State was to send delegates. The subject was to be discussed, and then the King was to be informed of this cruel, this awful thing that he was doing, and he was to be petitioned to listen to the voice which echoed his own tongue, and which under every trial had spoken but loyal words of him.

Every parish sent its most notable men, and of these Monsieur Valvier, Annette's father, was one. The meeting at New Orleans was a gathering of all that was wise and distinguished throughout the whole State, and it was unanimously decided to send to France a delegation of three men, to bear to the King himself their petition.

These three men left for France on the first vessel which sailed, and one

can imagine the passionate nature of the appeal which they carried with them, in which the whole colony besought the King to let them die as they had lived,—Frenchmen to their hearts' core.

Think of the feeling of relief which swelled every heart as the crowds gathered to see the envoys depart bearing the message to France and to their King!

Not one doubted but that the eloquence of Jean Milhet, who headed it, would win back their loved State from the hated Spaniard, and that he would speedily return with the joyful news, and that once more it would be French land for French men.

To the doors of France are laid many acts of cruelty and oppression, but there is no sadder story than the grief and humiliation to which this little

delegation was subjected. For one whole year they waited, were put off from day to day with first one excuse and then another, and at last, sick and heart-broken, sailed back to New Orleans without ever having seen the King nor presented their petition!

Even though their chief envoy did not return, and there was no news of the success of their petition, the people of Louisiana seemed to have no doubt as to its success. Judge then of the fever of excitement into which they were thrown when a letter arrived in July, 1766, saying that Don Antonio de Ulloa, the Spanish envoy, was on his way to take possession.

What should be done?

Whither should they turn? New meetings were called, the militia was strengthened as much as possible; but month after month passed away and

Don Antonio did not arrive, so that the people quieted down and hope bubbled up afresh.

One morning in February, 1767, when the Commandant awoke, he found anchored below the Belize, that old fortress at the mouth of the river, a large frigate flying the Spanish colours. On board was Don Antonio with his personal suite, two companies of Spanish infantry, and some Capuchin monks.

In March, in a frightful storm of wind and rain, they landed on the levee in New Orleans, and were met by a sullen crowd of citizens and by a mass of unwilling French troops.

The Spanish envoy, haughty, severe in aspect, and a martinet in demanding that deferential ceremonial etiquette which was so firmly engrafted into Spanish nature, either could not or

would not understand the feelings which prompted the ardent Louisianians to cling to their nationality. He expected the people to change at his coming their flag and their allegiance, the soldiers their service, and all to hasten to assume the Spanish yoke. He could not understand their refusal to do so, and when the Superior Council of the city requested him to show his credentials, he abruptly refused, although he agreed to defer taking possession till more Spanish soldiers were sent to him.

This was at least the form to which he agreed; but he proceeded to get control as far as possible, visiting in turn all the military posts, and replacing the French flag and the French commanders with Spanish ones.

Over New Orleans alone did the French flag still wave.

It may be easily understood that such high-handed deeds were not accomplished without protest on the part of the people of Louisiana. Curtailed of their possessions on every side, for by the "Treaty of Paris" much had been ceded to the English, they proposed to make as stubborn a resistance as possible.

In the remote parishes the feeling flamed almost higher than at New Orleans itself, since the sight of the detested Spanish flag was an ever-present insult.

During the year which had passed since the deputation had been sent to Paris bearing the memorial to the King, Monsieur Valvier had wasted neither time nor effort to arouse those with whom he came in contact, and keep them rigorously opposed to Spanish rule.

There were stormy meetings in the parish to which he belonged, in which he was always an impassioned leader. There were secret meetings at his and the neighbouring plantations. He became gloomy, a man with but one thought in his head,—the disgrace of belonging to Spain.

It was small wonder that with its head so distraught the plantation fell into neglect. The crops of indigo and tobacco failed, since the master's eye no longer kept watch on careless servants.

Madame Valvier's ill-health increased as the winter season approached, and on little Annette fell more and more the care of the family and home. Scant crops made scant money, and it was only by unceasing care that Annette kept the active little brothers clothed and fed, and saw that the languid mother

had her fresh fruit and café au lait, and that her favourite gowns of delicate white were kept mended and ever fresh.

Nor were these all her duties.

At evening, when her father returned depressed and miserable from a never-ending discussion with neighbouring planters as to the ignominy of their lot, it was Annette who met and tried to cheer him. She had ever something ready for him, were it only a bowl of fresh figs; and the earnest child at last became the confidant of the despairing man.

One memorable evening he returned later than usual, and to Annette's surprise and pleasure his eyes were bright and shining, and he carried his head proudly and with confidence. Tenderly embracing Annette, he cried, —

“At last, at last have I prevailed on

these neighbours who hate and yet fear the Spanish. All is ready, and tomorrow we at least will show Don Ulloa that there are loyal Frenchmen enough in Louisiana to refuse to live under the Spanish flag and his detestable rule."

"But, father, what is it you would do?"

"Lean closer, my child, for none here must learn of this till everything is ready and we leave for the city."

"Does mother know, dear father?"

"No, Annette, I dare not tell her; her constant illness makes her timorous."

The young girl pressed closer to his knee, her large, serious eyes fixed on his face. So wrapped was the man in his own thoughts that he knew not the heavy burden he was laying on the already overcrowded young shoulders.

To her the father unfolded his plans.

"Well you know the cruel blow

that has been dealt to us from France, and how the Spaniard Don Antonio has sought to make Spaniards of us all,—true-born Frenchmen that we are; how he has hoisted the Spanish flag, and manned all our forts with Spanish soldiers. To-morrow evening there will start from this plantation Monsieur Biron, myself, and all the owners of the plantations in this parish, with such of their men as they can arm, and by boat we will go down the Bayou, stopping at each plantation as we go, and gathering men together till we reach New Orleans.”

“Oh, father!” interrupted Annette, breathlessly, “will you take an army into the city?”

“So I hope; and these, with the loyal French Guard and the citizens, will enable us to sweep onwards, and Don Antonio will find what manner of

men he has to deal with, and we will not rest till he is safely confined within the walls of the Belize.”

In the excitement of his story Monsieur Valvier’s voice rose till there came from the room beyond, where Madame Valvier lay, the sleepy question as to why they talked so late.

Putting his finger to his lip to warn Annette, he replied, —

“I but tell a tale to Annette, who will go now to bed.” Kissing her fondly good-night, he whispered in her ear, —

“Remember to tell not a word, Annette, and lest I do not see you alone again, I say farewell, till we put the hated Spaniard where he will do no further harm.”

Although Annette crept to bed, her eyes for a long time stared into the darkness. She feared, not for the suc-

cess of her father's mission, but lest in some way he be hurt. She saw, as he described it, Don Ulloa safely confined in the dreaded Belize, and she rejoiced in her childish heart over the grand part her father was to take in keeping Louisiana for the French.

When the next night came, she peeped cautiously out from between the casements, and saw dark figures take their places in the pirogues drawn up at the landing and silently paddle down the Bayou.

She saw her father in the leading boat, and with him were several of their own men, and in the flaring light of the single torch she saw the gleaming of the guns.

In a silent adieu she waved her hand, even though she knew that her father could not see her, and confiding on his belief and assurance of success, she fell

into a deep and dreamless sleep, and over the whole plantation rested an absolute quiet.

But her father — Ah, the sadness of that night trip!

The few men who had started with him from the plantation in the hope that they would be joined by many more of wealth and power were cruelly disabused of their beliefs. There was but a handful more; but in the small group was the spirit of an army, and it was hoped that Don Ulloa could be surprised just before dawn, and with the first successful blow many would hasten to join the victorious party.

It was the old story of a forlorn hope.

In some way Don Ulloa had been apprised of the uprising, and the party had barely set foot on the levee at New Orleans before they were sur-

rounded and taken prisoners by a strong party of Spanish soldiers.

Monsieur Valvier, as the leader, was not detained in the city, but sent up the Bayou to Fort St. John, a desolate spot on the shores of Lake Pontchartrain, at the head of Bayou St. John.

During the first two days of his imprisonment Monsieur Valvier was stunned. He seemed incapable of realising the misfortune which had befallen not himself alone, but the little family at home. Too late he saw that the lukewarm policy of the others whom he had tried to induce to join him was not all selfish, and as happens so often to the enthusiast, he saw too late the folly of his actions.

It was the stinging thought of these helpless sufferers at home which at last aroused him, and spurred him on to see if their welfare could not be in some

way assured. The intendant in charge of the fort was hard and cold, but, as Monsieur Valvier soon learned, was not averse to accepting a ransom.

Indeed, he informed Monsieur Valvier of this fact himself, and allowed him to send a letter home telling of his personal safety, and that his liberty could be bought. Till this letter arrived the plantation on the Bayou Gentilly had been a sad place.

When, as one day after another passed and Monsieur Valvier did not return, Annette, not knowing what to do, told her mother of the uprising, and Madame Valvier, with health already undermined, became so seriously ill that poor Annette knew not which way to turn.

One or two of the slaves had strayed home, and from them Annette had learned that at least her father was

alive, and at last came the letter which told that he could be ransomed if a sufficient sum of money could be raised. The letter ended, —

“Alas, dear child, I know too well that there is naught left which may be turned into money to procure my freedom. I see too late that I have been led away from my duties to my little ones and their mother. God grant that they may be kept in safety; as for me my heart is breaking!”

Madame Valvier was too ill to give Annette any counsel. All day long the child kept saying to herself, —

“My father must be ransomed, but how? Where shall I get the gold? Oh, mamma, if you could but help me!”

At last, passing through the children's room while waiting on her mother, Annette's eyes fell upon the

boards which concealed the leaden-lined box containing the papers and necklace.

“The pearl necklace,” she cried softly to herself, “why have I not thought of it before?” Removing the cover, she felt hurriedly within the enclosure to assure herself that it was safe.

The rest of that day, as she went about her duties, her one thought was of the way to get it to her father, and at last she decided that she must go with it herself. There was no one whom she could trust with this price of her father’s freedom, and her heart was full of the thought of saving him, so that there was no room for fear.

She determined to start that night, and, used from infancy to the management of a boat, she did not hesitate as to the means of travelling.

But her mother—how to leave her ?

She called the woman from the kitchen, an old slave but a faithful one, and bade her sleep within the next room, so that if Madame called she should hear her.

“For,” said Annette, “see, Tignon, I must go on a message for my father. When my mother wakens, tell her that I shall soon return, — remember, Tignon, soon return.”

As soon as it was dark, Annette took from its hiding-place the necklace, and as the cool, milky globes slipped through her fingers, she kissed them, saying, —

“Dear father, to think that these may save thy life. I remember my mother said that they were never to be parted with save ‘for life or honour.’ Perhaps this time it may be both, but I cannot tell.”

For a moment she was at a loss how

to carry them, and then putting them about her neck she snapped the clasp securely and drew over them the waist of her gown, which was fashioned to come high in the neck.

“’Tis the easiest and the simplest way, and certainly none would think that such a thing lay beneath my calico frock.”

She kissed the little brothers and sister, and bade Pierre take good care of them till she should return, whispering in his ear, —

“I go for father, but tell of this to no one till I return.”

And Pierre, with his wide-staring eyes fixed on her face, could only say, —

“I will promise.”

At the landing Annette chose the smallest and lightest pirogue, and, with the caution one would have expected

THE PEARL NECKLACE

from an older and wiser head, put in the bottom an extra paddle and a small basket of food. She pushed off the little dug-out, and turning its head down stream looked back with confidence, saying in her brave young heart, —

“Shortly I shall return, and with my father.”

All night the child floated and paddled down the silent and lonely Bayou, often terrified by the strange night sounds which came from the swamps, and occasionally cheered by the light glimmering in the window of some of the planters' homes on the shore. When she was most alarmed, she would reassure her little trembling heart by putting her hand on the breast of her frock, beneath which lay the necklace, and by whispering to herself the beloved name of “father.”

The rising sun saw her heading her boat into the small channel which led into Bayou St. John, and it was late afternoon when the weary Annette saw frowning before her the rough palisades which enclosed Fort St. John.

The soldier on duty could scarcely believe his eyes when the little pirogue came alongside the quay, and was still more astonished when with trembling voice Annette said, —

“Sir, may I please see the Governor?”

“The Governor! why, what should the Governor do here? Who are you, and what would you with the Governor?”

“I have business with the Governor, sir.”

At this reply the man laughed long and loud, and poor Annette was ready to weep with disappointment and fatigue. Then remembering that at any

rate her father was within those walls, she plucked up courage and began again.

“If Monsieur the Governor is not here, is there any great general here?”

The soldier laughed again, and said below his breath, —

“Great general — no; but the great Sir Intendant is here, if you can do your business with him”; and there was another burst of laughter as the burly man looked at the slender form standing before him.

“Take me to him, please,” said she, and she gave one touch to the frock below which lay the precious heirloom as the soldier turned to lead the way within the enclosure.

“Ho, Roget!” he called, “this lady comes on business with Monsieur the Intendant”; and poor frightened Annette was passed along mid the rude

jesters of the soldiers, till she reached an ante-room to which was attached the small office of the Intendant. At last a voice said, —

“You may enter”; and Annette, who between fright and fatigue was ready to weep, found herself standing before a man with flashing eyes and a brilliant scarlet and gold uniform, who was looking at her with unconcealed interest.

“Well, child, what would you with me?” and Annette, raising her head, bravely answered, —

“I come to ransom my father, Monsieur Valvier.”

The Intendant frowned; and surely the pale child before him, in a simple calico gown, with empty hands and eyes full of unshed tears, hardly seemed able to ransom a bird, much less a political prisoner.

The Intendant's voice was harsh and cold as he said, —

“Ransom means gold, child, — gold, or lands.”

“Alas, Monsieur, I have neither,” said the trembling little girl, “but I thought perhaps —” And she drew from its place of concealment the splendid necklace.

The Intendant could scarcely conceal a start.

“How came you by this?” he asked, letting the rich strings glide through his fingers.

“’T was the marriage portion of my grandmother in France, then of my mother also, and was to be mine. I will give it to you for my father, Monsieur Valvier.”

The sight of the jewels recalled to the Intendant scenes in his native Spain, where the Spanish grandees

loved to ruffle it in laces and jewels of the choicest description, and where the dusky Spanish beauties often chose pearls, since these milky gems but served to throw out the fire of their eyes and the rich tones of their olive skins. As he mused, passing the pearls between his fingers, poor Annette was torn with anxiety lest the necklace should fall short of the ransom desired.

“Oh, Monsieur, is it not enough?” she cried, one trembling hand holding the other; “we have naught else, my mother is ill,—I came alone”; and the tears so bravely held back now fell in showers.

The Intendant had no idea of giving up the necklace, yet was not wholly cruel; so, striking on a bell, he called to the orderly who answered it,—

“Bring Valvier hither.”

The sound of the words caused

Annette to wipe her eyes, and in a moment, with a little scream of joy, she rushed into the arms of her father, whose wonder at her presence froze the words on his lips.

“Monsieur Valvier,” said the Intendant, “you are free. The ransom provided by your daughter is sufficient. But you must give me your parole that you will never again bear arms against the Spanish flag, and that you will accept such regulations as Spain deems best for her colonies.”

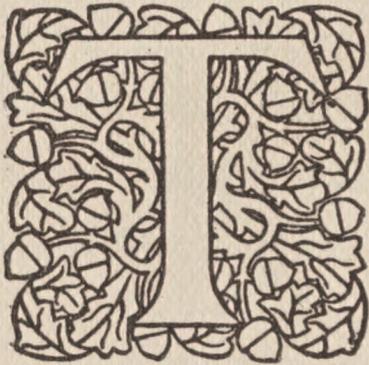
“I give my parole,” answered Monsieur Valvier; “but, Annette, ransom—what had you, poor child?”

Annette’s face was wreathed in smiles as she whispered in his ear, “The pearl necklace, dearest father.”



DICEY LANGSTON

1787



HERE WAS A pleasant mellow glow in the great low-ceiled kitchen, and the absolute quiet was unbroken save for an occasional crackling of the sticks which made a bright fire on the hearth. Yet, if the room was still, it was but because Dicey chose it so, and as she stood beside the huge wheel which a few moments before had been whirling merrily, she looked with thoughtful eyes at the fire.

Now, to tell the truth, Dicey did not like to be alone, nor was it usual for her to be silent. The every-day Dicey

was singing if she was not talking, or spinning if she was not busy about the house, or flying here and there on errands for her father, or hunting up the brothers to do this or that,—to play or ride, or come to meals or something,—for Dicey was quite a little queen, as a girl with five big brothers has a right to be.

A father and five big brothers, but no mother, poor little girl! and she had grown to be sixteen years old, the pet of her brothers and the darling of her father's heart, and, as you may guess, somewhat spoiled and self-willed. Yet I would not have you think for a moment that she was selfish, for she was not so; but she had grown to depend very much on herself, and to decide for herself many questions which other girls who had mothers to turn to would have left to them.

Dicey's father was no longer a young man. Indeed, he was almost past middle life when, ten years before, he had left his home near Charleston, shattered in spirit by the death of his wife, and gone to the "Up Country," as the northern part of the State of South Carolina was called, and started life anew. Dicey hardly remembered the old home at all. Her thoughts and her affections were all centred about the comfortable home in whose kitchen she now stood, and over whose comfort she reigned.

She stood for many minutes as we saw her first, quite motionless, and then, as the evening air brought to her ear a sound so slight that you or I might not have noticed it, she ran to the window and looked out.

The house stood in the centre of a clearing on the top of a gentle ridge,

and flowing out on either hand were dales and hills still covered with the forests through which the hunters and cow-drivers had wandered years before. Through this country the Catawbas and the Cherokees roamed, and but a short distance from the little settlement of which Solomon Langston's house was a part, lay that well-known Indian trail called the "Cherokee Path," which led from the Cherokee country on the west to the lands of the Catawbas on the east.

On the flat lands below the hills stretched wide plains destitute of trees and rich in fine grass and gay with flowers. Here roamed the buffalo, elk, and deer. Here also were wild horses in many a herd, and it was from one of these wandering bands of horses that Dicey's own little pony had been captured by brother Tom, before he

married and went to live at "Elder Settlement" across the Tyger River, a deep and boisterous stream, between which and the Enoree lay the plantation where Dicey's father had made his home.

All this time she has been standing at the window, looking out over a landscape which lay clear and white before her in the moonlight. The slight sound which had caught her ear was getting louder every moment, and at last two figures came into view, her father and one of her brothers, who had ridden early that morning to the settlement "Ninety-six" to hear the latest tidings about the War, and to gain some news regarding the revolutionary movement which hitherto had been largely confined to the southern portion of the State.

For Dicey it had been a long and weary day. Her father's last words

were: "Let no one know where we have ridden, Dicey, for in such days as these it is best to keep one's own counsel, and you know, little daughter, that most of our neighbours belong to the King's party."

And Dicey had remembered, even though Eliza Gordon had come over that afternoon with her sewing, and the two girls had worked on their new kerchiefs, fagoting and stitching and edging them with some Mignonette lace which Eliza's mother had brought from Charleston when last she went to town. Such silence was hard enough for Dicey, who was used to tell whatever thoughts came into her mind, particularly to Eliza, who was her very "dearest friend."

When Mr. Langston had dismounted, and Dicey had taken one look into his face, she cried out, —

“Oh, father, is the news bad? I can see by your face it is none of the best. Is that cruel King over seas never going to stop his taxing? Shall I throw out the tea?”

“S’hush, Dicey, my girl. Remember what I told you this morning. There are none others about us who think as we do, and it behoves us to be careful both in what we say and do.”

As he spoke, he drew Dicey into the house, and Henry followed, the horses having been taken to the stables by one of the slaves, who, like Dicey, had heard the sound of the riders and come forward to meet them. Once within doors Dicey forgot for a moment her eagerness for news, and ran forward to stir up the fire which had fallen low while she mused, and to light the candle which hung from its iron

bracket on the back of her father's chair. She set the kettle on the arm of the crane to boil, and put close at her father's elbow his long clay pipe and box of tobacco, then brought out a tray with glasses and a generous bowl, into which she put spices and lemon, together with sugar and a measure of wine which she poured from a jug which was fashioned in the form of a fat old man with a very red face and a blue coat.

Kneeling on the hearth, she watched to see the steam come from the kettle's nose, and as it seemed o'er long to her impatient spirit, she cast another billet of wood upon the dancing flames.

"Come, come, little daughter," her father said, "Henry and I have ridden far, and your impatience does but delay matters. In truth, I am so weary and chilled that I am thirsting for the

spiced wine, which your treatment of the fire does but delay.”

Now Dicey seized the poker and hastily endeavoured to make up for her error in putting on the new log, the only effect of her efforts being to make Henry laugh and take the poker from her hand, while he said, —

“Keep the little patriot quiet, father, since, if a watched pot never boils, this one is like to stay ever simmering.”

Mr. Langston held Dicey’s hand, and all fixed their eyes on the kettle, and as the first slender trickle of steam came from its nose, Dicey caught it from the iron arm, and soon had two fragrant glasses of hot wine ready for the travellers.

“Now, father,” she said, as she seated herself at his knee, — “now, father, the news!”

“’T is true, Dicey, that at Gowan’s

Fort many of our people have been horribly murdered.”

“Oh, father, not by Indians,” cried the girl, who well knew what this would mean.

“By worse than Indians,” answered Mr. Langston, — “by white men painted as Indians, who were even more cruel than the savages, if that can be.”

Dicey sprang to her feet and turned to her brother.

“Do you know if ‘Bloody Bates’ had anything to do with this, Henry?”

“Yes, he was the leader, and it is said that he boasted that his next raid should be in the country of the Eno-ree, where he said ‘dwelt so many fat Whigs.’”

“Just let him come this way,” cried Dicey, “and he will find that the fat Whigs are ready for him.”

Even though the case was grave

enough, Henry and his father could not forbear a smile at the thought of Dicey, little Dicey, setting up as a match for the cruel bully who had made himself such a terror to the country-side by his midnight maraudings and treacherous killings that he had come to bear the name of "Bloody Bates."

But Dicey, even though she was a girl, had a secret, and, what was stranger yet, she kept it, but in her brave little heart she resolved that if it were possible she would make it serve her friends.

So the next day she went forth in the afternoon carrying her work with her. Henry, who saw her start, little dreaming of the plans in that curly head, called out in a loud, cheerful voice, —

"I wager I know what is in that bag,

Dicey. A new frock for dolly, made in the latest mode. But, Dicey, see that it be not of red, since our enemies are far too partial to that colour to suit me."

"No such foolishness as you think, brother! I am to finish my kerchief which Eliza and I have been sewing on these three or four days. Maybe it will be all done when I come home."

Dicey hurried on, almost afraid that she would let out the secret if Henry talked much longer about dolls. Dolls, indeed! why, she had n't looked at one for years!

Eliza saw her coming and ran to meet her.

"Come within doors," said Eliza, when their greetings were over, drawing Dicey with her. But this did not suit our little patriot's plans at all, and holding back, she said, —

"Let's go and sit in the tree-seat,

Eliza. 'T is so pleasant out of doors to-day, and then you know we can talk over things there."

"Go you there and I will come when I get my reticule," answered Eliza, who, like Dicey, was glad to escape from the keen eyes of mother and elder sister, neither of whom had much sympathy for over-long stitches or puckered work.

Dicey did as she was bid, and climbed into the tree-seat where for years the children had been used to play, and, now that they had grown older, to which retreat they took their sewing or a book, though these latter came to hand rarely enough, the Bible and some books of devotion being thought quite enough reading for young people in those days.

When both girls were comfortably seated and thimbles and needles were ready, Dicey fetched a great sigh.

“What is the matter with you, Dicey? Have you aught ailing you?”

“No,” said Dicey, “nothing very much. I was wondering if, when this horrible war was ended, you and I should ever go to some great city like Charleston or Fredericksburg, as did your sister Miriam. Think of it, Eliza, to go to some great town where there are many houses and carriages, and a play-house, and, best of all, balls!”

At this magic word Dicey tossed into the air the little kerchief, and, ere it fell, was on the ground holding the skirts of her calico frock, bowing and smiling to an imaginary partner, now toeing this way and that, as if she were going through the dance, though, to tell the truth, the little minx had never seen anything of the kind, but had got her information from Eliza's sister

Miriam. All of Miriam's knowledge had been acquired in safer and happier days, when she had made a visit to Fredericksburg, and astonished the young girls on her return with marvellous tales of what she had seen and heard, and the gaieties she had taken part in. Dicey and Eliza had often practised in secret, and though their steps would not have passed muster in a drawing-room, they had furnished them with pleasure for many an hour.

“Oh, Dicey, come up again! If mother sees you, she would make us come right away into the house; you know that she thinks that such things as dancing but waste the time of young maids like you and me.”

Thus urged, Dicey with a sigh took up the sewing again, and sat once more beside Eliza in the tree. But her thoughts were flying all about, and

Eliza spoke twice ere Dicey noticed what she said.

“When father comes home to-night, he brings with him Colonel Williams.”

The remark seemed simple enough, but a sudden light flooded Dicey’s mind.

“Coming home,” echoed she; “why, you told me a day or two since that he would not be home till after harvest.”

“Yes, but things have come about differently,” answered Eliza, with an important air. “My father has been in a great battle, and he is coming with Colonel Williams to stay for a day or two till Captain Bates gets here too.”

“Captain Bates! Do you mean ‘Bloody Bates’?” asked Dicey, pale with horror.

“My father says that is but a Whig name for him, and that he has done good service to the King in subduing

pestilent Whigs," answered Eliza, bridleing, and secretly pleased at the easy way the long words tripped from her tongue.

"That awful, cruel man coming here!" and Dicey half looked round to see if the mere speaking of his name had not brought upon the scene one of the most cruel bandits who under the name of scout had wrought endless cruelties. In a moment the importance of the information had shot into her mind! If she could find out something more! Sure, whatever Eliza knew were easy enough to learn also.

"Comes he here to rest too, and at your house, Eliza?"

If Eliza had given a thought to the low voice and shaking hands of her friend, she might have paused ere she told news which was of the greatest importance to such Whig families as

lived in the neighbourhood, and more particularly to those who dwelt in the "Elder Settlement" on the other side of the river, and were entirely unprotected. Among them was Dicey's eldest brother with his young wife and little family.

"Comes he here to rest too?" and Eliza, proud of her information, and entirely forgetting that she had been told to impart it to no one, answered briskly, —

"No, but he stops here to meet some of the soldiers who go with him, and only think, 'tis at our house that they will paint themselves just like the Cherokees!" At the mere thought Eliza clapped her hands. "Think how comical they will look," she went on, while every moment Dicey felt herself getting colder and colder with fear. "And sister Miriam has done naught

but scurry about and turn things topsy-turvy. It's Captain Bates this and Captain Bates that, till one feels ruffed all the wrong way. You know I told you that he was coming here one day, and you laughed and said he dare not!"

Yes, Dicey remembered. This was the secret she had withheld, thinking that, like enough, it was but some of Miriam's boasting that this savage man should seek her at her home. It was true, however, and like to be soon. How was she, Dicey, to warn those who were so unprotected?

Thinking more deeply than ever she had thought before, Eliza babbled on, her silent companion taking no note of what she said.

"Well, Dicey, if you cannot listen to what I say, and not even answer me, I shall go into the house. Besides, my kerchief is all done, and mother

told me to bring it to her when the stitches were all set. How does it become me?"

As she spoke, Eliza threw it about her round white throat, and tossed her head, the exact copy of sister Miriam.

But Dicey was too absorbed to notice her companion's small frivolities. Her thoughts were solely on how to get word to her brother of the impending arrival of "Bloody Bates" in the neighbourhood. Fears for the safety of her own home were not wanting, since Henry, the only brother left at the old homestead, was but waiting the summons to go and join the command of Colonel Hugh Middleton.

As Dicey walked slowly home along the bridle path which served for a road in that sparsely settled region, her mind had not thought of any plan by which her message was to be sent to

her brother and his friends. Yet over and over the words formed themselves in her brain, "They must be told, they must be told."

Her father was feeble, and these years of anxiety and of hard work since his sons had been called away from home to bear their share of hardships in the War to which there seemed no end, had enfeebled him still more. From him the news must be kept at any risk. Perhaps brother Henry would go; but while this thought passed through her mind, she saw him coming through the wood on his horse.

"I have ridden this way to tell you good-bye, little sister. Even now word was brought that I must join my company. Come hither"; and as Dicey ran to his side he bent down, saying, "Set thy foot on my stirrup, I have

that to say which must not be spoken aloud.”

As Dicey did as he bade her, and stood poised on his stirrup leather, holding tightly to his hand, he whispered in her ear, —

“Be brave, little sister, and take the best care you can of father. He is ill and weak, and it vexes me sorely to leave such a child as you with no one stronger to protect you. Yet go I must, and I trust that before long Thomas may come for you and my father, or that Batty will return.”

As Dicey looked into her brother's troubled face, the thought that he must not be told rushed upon her. Go he must, and they must take such care of themselves as they could. So she leaned forward, and said as cheerfully as possible, —

“Never fear for us, brother. There

is no danger for father and me, for sure none would attack an old man and a young maid. See, I am not in the least afraid."

"I could leave you with a better heart if I thought that were the truth, yet even as we have spoken thy cheeks have grown as white as milk, and see, your hand trembles like a leaf in the wind!"

Dacey pulled away that telltale member and jumped down from the horse.

"When the time comes, I'll prove as good a soldier as any of the Langston boys, rest you assured of that," she cried.

"Farewell, then, brother Dacey"; and Henry tried to cheer her by making her smile. Then, with his own face set in a look far too grave for one so young, he rode down the path in the flickering light, little dreaming of the desper-

ate resolution which was forming in the mind of his sister. As she got the supper ready, and talked brightly as was her wont with her father, she had decided that she must be the one to take the news across to brother Tom at the Elder Settlement; and oh dear, oh dear, she must go that very night, for who could tell, perhaps "Bloody Bates" would stop there on his way, for she knew not which direction he was coming from. Yet for her father's sake she was as much like her own cheerful self as she could be, and she forced herself to eat, as the way would be long and difficult. Twice she almost gave way to tears in the safe shelter of the pantry; yet do not blame my little Dicey, for though she felt fear, she never once thought of giving up her mission.

When her duties for the night were all done, and the hot coals in the fire-

place carefully covered so that a few chips of light wood would set them blazing in the morning, Dicey sat down and tried to think out how she should manage. Her father was sleeping in his great chair by the fireplace, and he looked so worn and old that she resolved to take on her own slender shoulders the whole responsibility.

Perhaps it was her steadfast gaze, or perhaps it was his thoughts, which wakened Mr. Langston with a start, caused him to look quickly round and ask, —

“Where is Henry?”

“Why, father dear, Henry rode forth this afternoon to join Colonel Middleton. You have been napping, I think.”

“True, Dicey, I did but dream. ’Tis late enough for an old man like me, so light the candle, and I’ll to bed.”

As she handed the rude candlestick

to him, Dicey threw her arms about his neck and swallowed hard to keep the tears that were so close to the surface from welling over.

“Why, child, what ails thee? One would think that I was to start on a journey too, whereas all I can do is to bide at home”; and Mr. Langston heaved a deep sigh as he said it.

“Brother Henry bid me take care of you, and I mean to, dearest father. Since you have sent five sons to this cruel war, it seems as if it might be that you and I were left at peace.”

“Yes, yes, daughter. I do but pray that I may live to see all my brave boys come home to me once more.” With bowed head Mr. Langston took his way to the small chamber opening off the living-room.

“Now,” thought Dicey, “must I plan and act. First must I write a few lines

to father, lest he think that I too have followed brother Henry.”

She hunted about for a fragment of paper, — a thing not too common in a frontier farmhouse, — then she dashed some water into the dried-up ink-horn, and mended a pen as well as she could.

Will you think any the less of her if I tell you that poor Dicey was a wretched penman? Her days at school had been very few, since the nearest one was at Ninety-six, and her father could ill spare his little housekeeper. Yet he had taught her a bit, and as she sat and wrote by the flaring rush-light, I am afraid that her tongue was put through as much action as her pen. Poor Dicey! the little billet which caused her so much labour was intended to allay her father's anxiety as well as to let him know where she had gone. Of the object of her mission there was

never a word. That she would tell him on her return. The little scrawl was set on the table with one end beneath the candlestick, where he would be sure to see it in the morning.

“Dear Father,” it began. “I go to carry a message to brother Tom. I leave early in the morning, and will return as soon as might be. There is naught to fear for me. Your loving Dicey.”

“’T is better,” she mused, half aloud, “to say ‘morning’ than to have him think that I was forced to go at night, lest I fall into the hands of some of these bandits on their way here. But I must not think of that, for I must be off as soon as I can get ready, and the faster I work the less afraid I am.”

She hurriedly put some food in a packet, and then crept up the stairs to her own tiny room under the eaves.

You would hardly have known her when she came softly down a few moments later. Her hair was bound and knotted close to her head, for well she knew how the bushes and trees would catch the flowing curls. Her stuff gown was kilted high and held securely in place, while on her feet she had drawn a pair of boots which were her brother Batty's, and, though large, they were stout and strong and came nigh to her knees. A heavy shawl covered her shoulders and was tied behind, and into the front of it she thrust the packet of food.

As she went softly out of the door, she gave a last look toward her father's room and then hastened on, anxious to give her warning and then hurry home. Dicey knew the way well, having been to visit her brother a number of times. But in her haste and excitement she

had not thought that a path by day with company is a very different thing from the same path by night and alone.

Yet this did not daunt her, even though there were strange noises in the forest and elfin fingers seemed to reach out from the bushes and pluck at her as she tried to hurry on. Each twig which snapped as she trod on it brought her heart uncomfortably to her mouth, in a way she did not like at all. The woods were bad enough, but infinitely worse were the marshes where there was not even a foot-log, much less a bridge to take her over the worst places, and but for Batty's boots she would have suffered cruelly from roots and stones.

Still she pressed bravely on. She gripped her hands and kept repeating, "Every step takes me nearer, every

step takes me nearer," till it made itself into a kind of tune. She dared not think that the worst was yet to come, and that the Tyger River with its brawling current had still to be crossed. When at last she heard a faint murmuring, it seemed to give her new strength, and she turned in that direction.

Just as the first gleams of dawn lighted the sky, she stood on the muddy banks of the river. She looked about her in the dim light and thought that she recognised the place as the ford where they usually crossed. So, quite exhausted, she threw herself upon the ground, saying to herself, "I will rest a few moments and take a bite of pone, for well I know that the water of the Tyger is deadly cold and muddy too."

As she thought, she acted, and in a

brief time rose to her feet, not with that springy lightness which was customary with her, but slowly and with effort. The long hard walk, the chafing of the boots which were too large for her, all made her feel stiff and lame, and as she waded into the water, it took all her courage to keep from screaming out.

In she went, a step at a time, thrusting one foot before the other to feel her way in the rushing water, and bewildered by the grey light and the heavy fog which lay above the water and hid the other shore. It seemed to her that the water was getting very deep, surely much deeper than when she went through it before, though on that occasion she was mounted safely on the back of her little pony.

“Oh, dear Molly, if only you were here with me now instead of safe at

home in your stall''; and one or two tears rolled over Dicey's cheeks to be immediately swallowed up in the swirling waters which every moment grew deeper around her.

She went forward, step by step, never once thinking of turning back; and now the wavelets reached her waist, and now they were breast high and so heavy that they threatened to draw her from her feet. Completely bewildered, not quite sure of her course since the opposite bank could not be seen through the low-lying fog, Dicey lost her track and wandered up stream instead of across. She noticed that the water, now just below her armpits, kept at the same height, and fearing that every moment it would grow deep enough to engulf her, she stopped a moment in her difficult course and looked about her.

What was that which she could dimly discern apparently advancing towards her? To her mind, already overwrought, it seemed "Bloody Bates" himself, as indeed it might have been, and with a shriek which she vainly tried to smother, she turned abruptly to the left and plunged with all the speed she could muster through the water.

Oh, joyful thought! The black stream was getting lower, it was but breast-high now, and as she leaped and plunged along, with every movement it receded, till at last she stumbled on the bank, and lay there sobbing with fright and exhaustion. She heard a soft swish in the river, and hastily raised her head to find that what had so terrified her was a huge buck, which was now half swimming and half wading to shore himself.

Cold and wet, half dead with fright and fatigue, Dicey, at sight of her supposed enemy, laid her head on her arms and had a good cry.

“Only a deer,” she sobbed, and then began to laugh, and with the laugh, feeling better, she scrambled to her feet, saying to herself, “’Tis but two miles to brother Tom’s and then I am safe.”

The way was easier now, for it was a travelled path, made by Indians, it is true, and their cruel allies the British, but still it was daylight, and away from the river the air was clear and fresh,—too fresh for comfort to the shivering girl, who ran and stumbled in her haste to get her message delivered. The two miles dragged themselves away at last, and through the trees Dicey saw the group of rude houses which made the Elder Settle-

ment, and ah! there was brother Tom already out of doors about his work.

As soon as Dicey saw him, she shouted, and when he looked up, he seized his gun, for a weapon lay ever within reach in those days. Little wonder was it that he did not recognise the small figure which ran towards him waving its arms and shouting words which he did but half catch. At the sound of the commotion Elie, his wife, came to the door, and at the first glance cried out, —

“Why, Tom, 'tis Dicey!” and ran out to meet her, fearful of bad tidings, since it was easy to see that the girl was almost at the limit of her strength. As soon as Tom realised who it was, he ran forward and caught her in his arms, and hurried into the house, his lips forming themselves into the one word, “Father?”

Dicey shook her head, and when Tom set her down on the stone hearth, she slipped down into a little wet heap with a pale face and eager eyes.

“Oh, brother Tom,” she began, as soon as she caught her breath.

“Stay,” said her brother, “is aught wrong with my father or brothers?”

“No,” said Dicey, “I came —”

“Then thy news will wait till thou art dry and warm, else we are like to have a dead Dicey instead of a living one. Elie, take and give her dry clothes, and I will make for her a mug of hot cider which will warm her through and through. From her clothes, the Tyger seems at flood these days.”

When Dicey, warm and dry once more, poured out her tale of warning, Tom hurried away to call the men of the settlement together. As the

small handful of grave settlers came and heard the news, Dicey felt in their few words of thanks ample payment for what she had undertaken in their behalf. Nor did they hesitate in their course. Packing together what possessions were most valued, and driving before them the few cattle which remained, they and their families that very afternoon crossed the Tyger at the ford which poor Dicey had missed, and sought the protection of the fort at Ninety-six. The next day Dicey was left at her own home and in the arms of her anxious father.

She told her tale to him, sitting by his side and holding his hand, for he could hardly realise that his little girl, his Dicey, had been through an experience at which even a man might have hesitated.

“My child,” said he, “it seems but

yesterday that I held you in my arms, and here you are a woman grown ere I thought it."

Fondly stroking her soft hair, he looked into the fire and spoke half to himself, —

"'T is like her mother; but a child to look on, yet with a heart of steel."

"Why, father, you think too much of it; 't was not so much after all. At least it seems so now that once more I am safe at home with you, though truly in the doing I was much afeared." Looking round as she spoke, she caught sight of the noon-mark on the window, and, jumping up, exclaimed, —

"Why, father, here have we sat gossiping till it is nearly midday and not a thing made ready for dinner! Shame on me for a bad housekeeper!" and with that she bustled away to prepare the simple meal which was the daily fare

of many a family living far from the towns. A pudding made of the white corn meal did not take long to stir together, and in a pot was soon stewing some bits of venison from the last deer which Henry had shot, part of which had been salted down for their winter supply. A portion of the pudding with a pinch of salt added, and baked on a hot iron shovel with a long handle, served instead of bread, and what was left would answer for their supper, with some of the cheese in the making of which Dicey was well skilled. There was always plenty of milk from their small herd of cattle.

After all had been settled for the afternoon, the trenchers washed and the pewter cups polished and set on their shelves, Dicey drew out her wheel and set herself at her spinning. The low whir and the comfortable ditty

which Dicey hummed hardly above her breath set her father to dozing in his chair, and neither of the occupants of the kitchen was prepared for the crashing knock which came on the heavy door.

Before Dicey could reach it to set it open, a harsh voice cried out, —

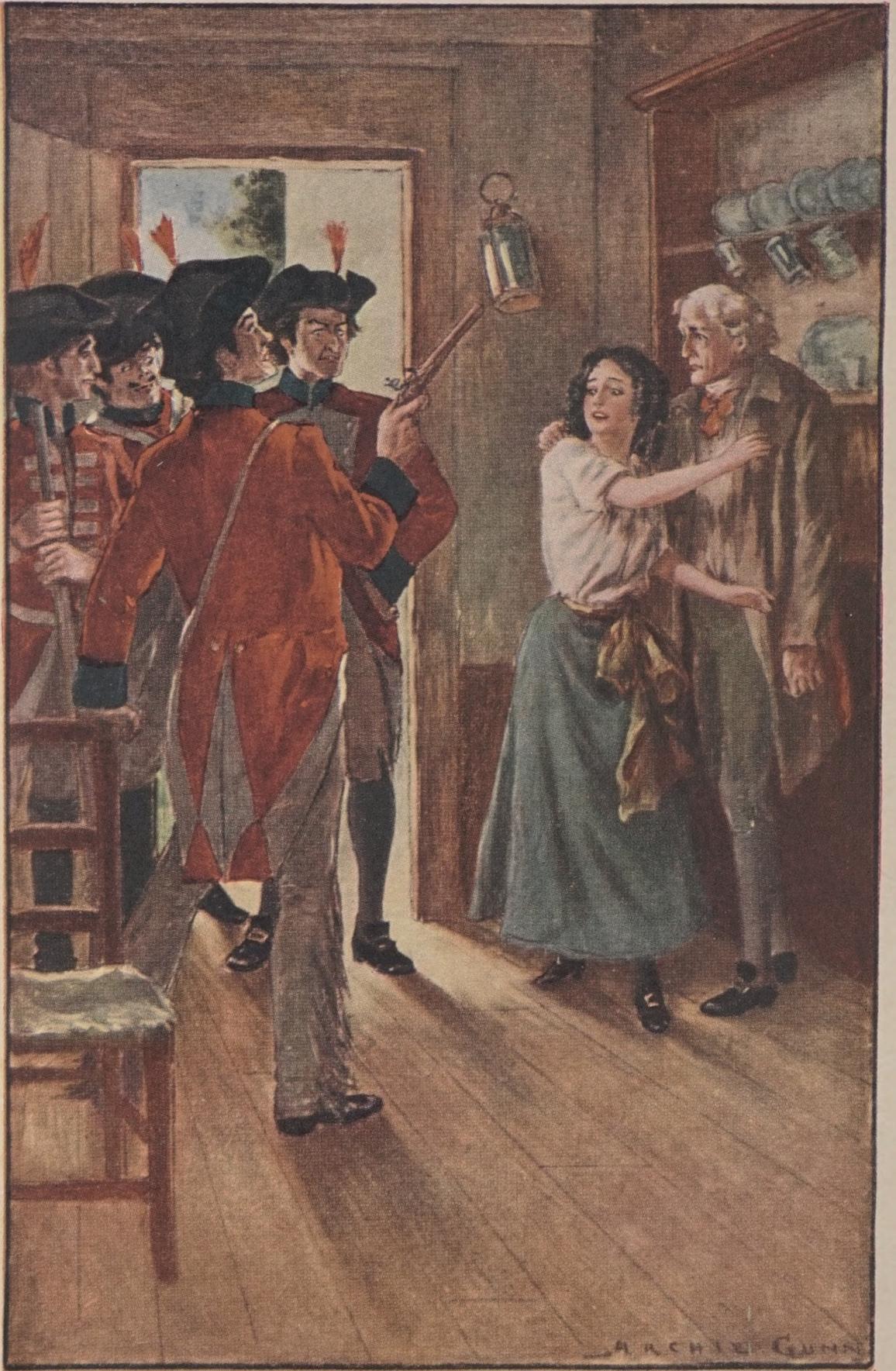
“If you open not that door and quickly, we’ll smoke out all of you!”

Dicey drew back, looking at her father for counsel.

“Draw the bolt, child,” he said; “we have no strength to withstand them. Our very weakness must be our protection.”

Dicey pulled back the great oaken bar which served as a lock, and in pushed half a dozen men heavily armed, none of whom she had ever seen before.

“So the Whig cub has gone, has he?” asked the one who seemed the leader,



“COWARD, SHOOT NOW, IF YOU DARE!”—Page 261.

a tall man dressed in buckskin trousers of Indian make, over which the red coat of the British officer seemed odd enough.

“It is true that my son has gone forth to serve his country,” said Mr. Langston, in a quiet voice.

At the reply, which seemed to enrage the ruffian, he strode a step forward, cocking his pistol as he advanced.

“I’ll show him how to serve his country when I find him, and as for you, old man, long enough have you hampered the King’s service.”

He pointed the weapon at Mr. Langston, when with a cry Dicey threw her arms about her father’s neck, and, shielding him with her body, called out over her shoulder,—

“Coward, shoot now if you dare!”

Bloody Bates, for indeed it was he, raised his pistol once more, and with a

wicked scowl was preparing to fire, when one of the men who had stood silently by till now knocked up the weapon, saying, —

“As long as the cub we came for has fled, let us on, Bates. We have no war with dotards and children.” The others murmured surly assent, and bidding Dicey and her father beware how they harboured traitors, the whole party withdrew.

It took Dicey scarce a moment to fly to the door and bar it, and then hurry back to her father, who was lying back in his chair, pale with the excitement and the peril which they had undergone, and only too thankful that one among the company had respected his grey hairs and Dicey's youth.

For many a day they lived in hourly fear of their lives, even after Bloody Bates had taken himself off on his raids

and the neighbourhood was comparatively peaceful.

Did Dicey undergo any more special perils, you ask?

Yes; once again she faced grave danger, being met by a scouting party as she was coming from a trip to the nearest town. They questioned her as to the whereabouts of her brothers and other Whigs in the vicinity, but she refused to tell what she knew. The leader threatened to shoot her, but she faced him bravely, crying, —

“Well, here am I; shoot!” opening her neckerchief at the same time. He was ashamed apparently, for the band rode on, leaving her to make her way home.

She lived to see all her brothers but one return from their duties in the army, and by her loving care and devotion made her father's life a happy one.

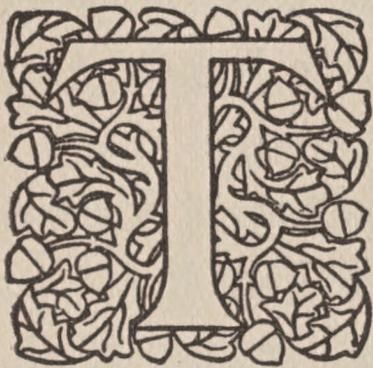
DEEDS OF DARING

She was only a little Southern girl living in a lonely spot, and long since dead; but her courageous acts live on and shine, as do all "good deeds in a naughty world."



THE MAID OF ZARAGOZA

1808



THE NOTES OF A hymn swept up the street,—a hymn so sung that it seemed a call to battle rather than a sacred song. It rose, it fell, it stirred the blood, the plaintive tones of the women's voices rising high above the fuller notes of the men, while soaring above all the others were the shrill, sweet voices of the altar boys.

On they came, with banners waving and with clouds of smoke rising from the swinging censers. But the music, strong as it rose on the morning air,

did not blot out the clang of the alarm bells which were constantly rung in every quarter of the city. Nor could it drown the boom, boom, boom of the bombardment which had been slowly wrecking the city for so long.

Augustina kneeled on the balcony with her bent head on her hands, her heart swelling as she listened.

“Ah,” said she to herself, “if I were but a man! If I could but help to save the city. Yet here must I sit and do nothing better than weave lace, while our brave men are dropping before those cruel guns.”

As the music grew fainter, she rose and stood watching the procession. At the head of the long narrow street in which she lived, towered the spires of the lovely old cathedral of the Virgin of the Pillar, and the procession which had just passed was of men and

THE MAID OF ZARAGOZA

women who sought to petition the Holy Mother for her aid in the desperate war which was being waged against their city.

Although the sun had been up some hours, the tall convents which were set among the houses made the street still dim, and as Augustina looked up towards the cathedral, the people in the procession seemed hardly larger than children moving slowly and singing as they went.

Every day in some part of the city was to be seen such a procession as had just passed, for although Napoleon and his soldiers had been besieging the town for forty days, never once did the people lose courage in their power to come out victorious from the struggle.

Yes, to triumph at last, though hunger, sickness, and ill-trained soldiers

were evils with which they had to struggle, as well as the enemy without their walls.

As the last singer entered the cathedral, Augustina seemed to wake from a dream, and a look of anxiety came over her face as she looked up the street. Leaning as far forward over the balcony as she dared, she could see nothing but some figures of men wrapped in dull brown cloaks, the only spots of colour being the gay kerchiefs bound about their heads.

“Augustina!” From within the house came the call, prolonged and whining, as if the patience of the caller were nearly exhausted.

“Yes, dear mother, just one moment longer.”

Again she leaned out and peered up the street, but whoever or whatever she looked for did not come in sight

With a sigh she drew back and entered the house.

The street in which Augustina lived was no whit worse than most of the thoroughfares in the old city of Zaragoza. The houses covered with balconies looked at each other across streets so narrow that in some of them a horse and cart filled the space from side to side, and the cobble-stones were so rough and irregular that walking was difficult. Yet Augustina had found the city fair enough to look upon before so many doors and windows were walled up on account of the bombardment, and before such numbers of the houses had been crumbled by the cannon balls.

Though her face was not as cheerful as was its wont when she turned to go in, she shook her shoulders as if to get rid of some disagreeable thought,

pushed back from her forehead the heavy black hair, and was able to show quite a presentable face to her mother when she reached her side.

“Why did you stay so long when you knew that I waited for you?” asked the invalid in a peevish tone.

“Did it seem long? Why, mother, ’t was only five minutes after all; just look at the clock. After the procession passed I only looked to see if Felipe came this way and if he had any news to tell.”

“Felipe, Felipe, everything is Felipe, while I sit here day after day, and only get what is thrown to me, as one throws a bone to a dog.”

“Ah, I see that the fever is bad again this morning, else you would never say a thing like that, mother dear. Now just look at me and say that again!”

Her mother turned to speak, but as she looked at the bright face, saw the love which filled the large dark eyes, passed her hand over the rosy cheeks, and felt the pressure of the strong young arms, she could not help but soften into a look of pleasure, and her words dwindled into —

“Well, well, it did seem long, but you are a good child, Augustina, and I love you well, as you know. But what with the fever and this dreadful war and the sound of the cannon, I spoke sharper than I meant.”

“Dearest, let me give you the cup of chocolate and the bit of bread, for I ate my breakfast long ago, before you woke.” She did not tell her mother how scant that meal had been.

“I hardly know if I wish for it,” her mother was beginning; but Augustina

was already in the next room, which served them as a kitchen, and soon hurried back bearing a small tray on which was the cup of chocolate and the bit of crusty bread which is the breakfast of every true Spaniard. Food was scant enough in more households than this. Augustina's mother, a widow with barely enough to scrape along on, was aided in peaceful days by the sale of the lace which Augustina's skilful fingers made. Everybody in Spain loves lace, and every woman wore it, having her whole mantilla of it if she could afford it, and trimmed with it if she could do no better. Her holiday skirt was flounced with it, her pretty little aprons edged with it, her snowy chemisette trimmed with it, so that there was always a demand for what Augustina's skilful fingers could make.

But now — what was the use of working at the pillow?

The siege which had lasted so long showed no signs of being broken, and no one had any coins to spare on such slight things as lace, when famine was staring the city in the face, and all day long, if one but looked from the window, the wounded could be seen being carried into the convents, or any other place where they could be tended and safe from the cannon balls.

“Is the chocolate sweet enough, mother?” asked Augustina anxiously. She had stirred into it the last spoonful of sugar which they had, and as the purse was running so low she hardly dared to buy any more.

“Sweet enough; and, Augustina, when you go out to-day, go first of all to the cathedral and say an Ave for me. I had hoped before this to be able to go

myself. Say, too, a prayer for our brave men who are holding the city against those wicked French.”

“I am going now to Our Lady of the Pillar, mother, and I will stop on the Prado and ask if, by any chance, there has been a call for lace. I have a fine piece ready; the lilies in it seem fairly to grow, do they not, mother?”

Augustina held up with pride a long strip of snowy lace into which were wrought lilies and roses so lifelike that it was almost as if they blossomed.

“I wish that we could afford to keep that piece, Augustina. I have watched it grow under your fingers for so long that I shall miss it when it is no longer here.”

“I shall hate to sell it, mother; yet the money for it would not come amiss, eh, dearest?”

The widow sighed and glanced at the

pillow as it lay on the table covered from dust, only the gay beads which tipped the bobbins being visible.

Augustina bustled about, making the house ready for the day, drawing the shade across the window so that her mother's siesta should not be disturbed in case she did not return immediately, and then she went into the kitchen. Here she packed into a small basket some little cakes and such simple food as their home afforded, and covered it with a napkin. Then, with her mantilla drawn over her head, she went into her mother's room and said, —

“Adios, mother, till I return. I may be late, so do not worry. Be sure that I will not forget your Ave at the cathedral.”

Kissing her fondly, she went down the stone stairs which led to their rooms, treading softly so as not to

rouse any of the neighbours who might come out and ask whither she was going.

She walked quickly up the quiet street, and, with a corner of her mantilla drawn over her face, looked neither to the right nor left. Few people were about, and every moment came the boom of the cannon, now a little louder and now less so, — as they were fired from the walls, or from the distant cannon of the enemy.

She kept bravely on, for she had a purpose before her. She wished to make a prayer for herself as well as for her mother, and turned to the cathedral, whither were also others hurrying, bound on the same errand as herself.

As the leather curtain of the door fell behind her, the dusky light of the great cathedral was pointed here and

there by hundreds of twinkling lights, and side by side on the pavement kneeled noble lady or ragged beggar, all intent on their devotions, whispering prayers for the deliverance of their beloved city and for the safety of her defenders. The solemn tones of the organ and the voices of the chanting priests were the only sounds to be heard, save from time to time a sob from some mourner who prayed for the dead.

As Augustina stood once more in the sunshine on the great steps of the church, she looked up and down the street, hardly able to realise that while the sky was so bright, such misery was in many homes, and such cruel fighting on the walls.

“On the walls!” Yes; that was the place whither she was bound! Felipe had not been to their home since the

day before yesterday. Something must have happened to detain him, for as he left he had called back, —

“Look for me to-morrow, Augustina”; and when Felipe said a thing he always kept his word; no one knew that better than she. It had been so from the days when they were little children together. When Felipe said, “I will do this,” or “I will not do that,” it always fell out just as he said. So now she was going to see for herself what had happened to keep him away. A horrid idea rose before her mind of Felipe wounded, but she drove it away, and thought only of how young he was and strong, so proud of being chosen by his townsmen to serve on the walls, so delighted with his uniform.

The mere thought of how she had seen him thus made her hurry all the faster; and she hoped he would like

the things which she had brought him to eat, for, poor boy, he had complained of being hungry the last time he came to them; and food was getting more scarce each day.

She reached the walls at last, and at the gate near the great convent of Santa Engracia, where Felipe had a gun, she was stopped by a sentinel who asked her business there.

“I come to see Felipe,” she answered briefly.

“A brother of thine, little one?” asked the soldier, as he noticed her basket, and tried to get a glimpse of her face through the mantilla.

“No, a friend,” was all she answered; for how could she tell this man that some day, when this war was over, she and Felipe were to be betrothed?

“Just a friend,” the man mimicked,

and then, seeing her bent head, he said more gently: "Well, 't is not allowed for friends to mount to the walls, but as it seems that you have something to eat, go you up. You will find Felipe at the gun at the second turn to the right."

Up the rude steps to the top of the walls, Augustina hurried, past one, two, three guns. At the fourth stood Felipe!

"Oh, Felipe!" she cried, "where have you been these last two days? In truth I could wait no longer to know what had befallen you. See, here is a bit of meat, and all the bread that I could spare, for mother must not suffer, you know, else had I brought more."

Felipe had just cleaned the gun for another charge, and as he stood beside it, he turned his weary and blackened face towards Augustina.

“I could not come,” he whispered hoarsely. “I have served this gun day and night since I saw you last, save for a few hours at night when those dastardly French had to rest too.”

“Poor Felipe!” murmured Augustina. “Here is some wine; take it, for you look worn and tired”; and as she spoke, she gave him a glass of the sour wine which is so esteemed by the Spaniard, and in which Felipe moistened some bits of bread, standing beside his gun all the while so as to be ready to load and fire as soon as he had finished.

The tumult was appalling. Orders were being shouted out from either side, clouds of smoke obscured the walls as well as the broad and grassy vega where the French camp was established. The noise was deafening,

and every few moments a ball, screaming as it went, flew over their heads, and burst somewhere in the city behind them, killing and destroying, and often leaving in its wake fiery embers which burst into flame.

Augustina steadied herself by putting her hand on the gun, and as Felipe turned to it once more he shouted to her, —

“Hear the Signorina speak, Augustina; she is the bravest lady on the walls!” and he thrust into the gaping mouth of the gun a huge iron case which he took from a pile near at hand, and which held within it many small iron balls.

“Now hear my lady’s voice!” turning towards Augustina with a look of triumph on his face.

There was a deafening roar, a cloud of smoke, and even as it floated about

them out of its midst seemed to come a great thing that flew towards them, — a whirling, screaming thing that never wavered in its track! Before she could realise what it was, there was a deafening roar, Augustina was thrown on her face, and heard all about her a sound as of falling stones. She knew in a moment, as soon as the noise had died away, that she was not hurt. She slowly scrambled to her feet, and looked about for Felipe.

Ah, he had been thrown down like herself!

“Felipe!” she called.

Amid the tumult her voice seemed but a whisper.

“Felipe!” Still there was no answer, and as she looked again she saw that on his breast lay a large bit of something that looked like a stone. She hurried to him and pushed it off, trying

to raise him as she did so; but he fell back, and she threw herself on her knees, lifting his head in her arms, and saying softly, —

“Felipe, dear one, where are you hurt? Answer me, I pray; 't is I, Augustina, who calls you.”

But there was no answer. The iron fragment from the cannon ball had hit Felipe above the heart, and struck out in a moment the life of a brave soldier. Again and again Augustina called to him, stroking the curling black hair, and smoothing the hands all stained from his work. How long she sat there with Felipe's head in her lap, she never knew. Slowly in her mind the idea grew that some one must take his place. No one must think that Felipe's gun was silent because he had deserted; the faith of his townsfolk in his courage must not be destroyed.

Besides, what was that she had heard? It was Felipe himself who had told her of the dreadful thing which happened every night on the walls. She could hardly bear to think of it,—but at dusk gibbets were set up, and on them were hung all deserters and cowards.

Oh, if they should think that Felipe was a coward!

Somebody must take his place, but who— who was to do it?

There were far too few men now, able to fill the places of danger on the walls.

“Then must even I,” said Augustina to herself; and she laid poor Felipe down tenderly, and threw her mantilla over the quiet face. There was no time for tears. She had watched him as he loaded the gun, and now tried to do it herself.

“Now may Our Lady of the Pillar help me!” and as she breathed the prayer, Augustina dragged the heavy case which held so many death-dealing balls to the mouth of the gun, lifted and pushed it into place. After firing the charge, she dropped on her knees, and with her hands covering her face waited through an awful moment!

Suddenly there was a tearing, crashing sound, an explosion so loud that it took away her breath, and then Augustina knew that the gun of Felipe spoke as if he still stood at its side. A sob broke from her lips, but she crushed it down, and with one look at the still form beneath the mantilla, she rose to her feet and turned to the gun. Her slender hands had difficulty in managing the heavy cases, but she kept at it bravely, murmuring to herself, —

“For Felipe and for Spain!”

It was for her country, too, that Augustina worked and toiled; for to the tips of her toes she was of Aragon. Her father and his father before him had watched the Ebro as it flows through the city; they had loved the olive groves by which it was surrounded, and they had stood in the arcades and market-places, their sad eyes watching the slow decay of a city which had once been the home of kings.

Cold and proud to the stranger, the Aragonese when aroused are fairly heroic in the way they fight for their country; and in 1808, when Augustina manned the gun for the sake of her playmate and lover who was slain, the same spirit burned in her heart as had in those of her ancestors centuries before, when the Berbers came and conquered.

The time crept along, but Augustina

never faltered. Her clothes were torn with the unusual labour, and her hands, more used to the threads of flax and the smooth wooden bobbins, were cut and bleeding from the rough metal of the cannon. Her long black hair became loosened and hung like a veil down her back. She worked like one possessed of man-like strength. Hardly did she allow the great cannon to cool before she thrust the charge into it, and dragged another iron case to its mouth, so as to have it ready at the first moment.

It seemed to her as if she had been the whole day at her post, when there hurried along an officer making his rounds to observe the condition of things on the walls.

At sight of Augustina he stopped and looked at her with amazement.

“What are you doing here, my girl?”



“WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, MY GIRL?”—Page 289.

he asked in no gentle tones, hardly able to credit what his eyes told him, and thinking that Augustina might perhaps be keeping watch over a sleeping soldier, and anxious to know the truth.

“I have but taken Felipe’s place, Signor Captain,” pointing with her hand to the figure lying on the stones beside the gun.

“Does — ” The Captain paused in his question. Something in the still figure seemed to tell him that it was not the sleep of fatigue that held Felipe while this slender girl worked his gun.

He stooped and lifted the end of the mantilla which covered the face. There was no need for further question. He rose and touched Augustina’s small stained hand.

“Poor girl!” he said; “was he your brother?”

“No, signor; he was Felipe. Since

we were children we had played together. His father and mine were old comrades, and when Felipe was left alone on his father's death, my mother told him to think that our home was his when he wanted it. But Felipe was brave, signor. He knew that we had little, and he worked hard for himself and me, too, since when we came of age we were to be married. Then came this war; he was chosen to serve, and, as the signor sees, he served as long as life lasted. Now I serve for him."

"Brave girl that you are! I would that we had more men like you, and like poor Felipe here! Stay but a little longer and I will send some one to relieve you."

"No, signor; I will stay in place of Felipe, if but you will send word to my mother that I am safe and will see her to-night."

“I can promise that, surely; and if your example does not shame those who lurk in safety behind the walls, I shall lose all faith in Aragon.” Saying which, the Captain passed on his way, saluting as he went, with bowed head and lifted hat, both the girl and the still figure under the mantilla.

All through the long afternoon Augustina worked. No cannon on the walls spoke more often than hers. Faint and weary, she ate what remained of the food she had brought to Felipe, and would not allow herself to think of anything but the duty before her. Not a tear fell from her eyes, and she kept whispering to herself, —

“I must make the Signorina speak!” and every time the cannon roared she looked down at Felipe and cried out, “Ah, Felipe, that was for you; she spoke for you!”

It was night before the promised relief arrived, — a soldier who looked hardly able to do the work, so pale was he.

“Have you been ill?” asked Augustina, as she made ready to go.

“But two days from the hospital,” said he; “yet every one who can stand has need to fight if we wish to save Zaragoza and Our Lady of the Pillar.”

“If you can bear through the night, I will come again in the morning. If it were not for my mother, I would not leave here now.”

“Surely you have done your best. No one could ask more; and as for the poor lad whose place you took, there are few who have been more faithful than he.”

“It is for that very reason that I come again,” said Augustina. “Never shall it be said that Felipe’s gun was

silent while I am able to stand beside it — and while Felipe guards it himself,” she added in a lower tone. She kneeled and looked long into the face of her dead comrade, and leaving the mantilla still covering his face, walked steadily off, wiping away with her tired hand the few tears that fell over her cheeks.

Bareheaded and alone, she walked to her home, climbed to the door of their rooms, and then, overcome with sorrow and fatigue, rushed in and threw herself on her knees beside her mother.

“Oh, my child, my dearest child!” and fondling and kissing her, her mother tried to give comfort and cheer to the weeping girl.

“To think that my little girl should be so brave! and, child, how came you to know how to load and fire one of those fearful guns?”

“I saw Felipe do it, mother, and he

said that his gun spoke oftenest of any on the walls. So I saw to it that it did not become silent, that was all!"

"Sit here, loved one"; and Augustina's mother put the tired girl into her own chair, and hurried away to get something for her to eat, and to light the brazier to warm her chilled frame, all her own weakness forgotten in the sight of her child's sorrow. Nearly all the night they talked, the mother trying in vain to keep Augustina from her resolve to return and serve the cannon the next day. But Augustina simply said, —

"I promised Felipe before I left him, mother dear, and I must go. Besides, I must do my share, and there are few enough to help on the walls."

Seeing that the girl could not be won away from her idea of her duty, both to the dead and to her country, her

mother at last gave up trying to dissuade her, and made her go to bed and try to sleep, so as to have strength for the coming day.

But although Augustina lay quite still with closed eyes, she did not sleep. All through the hours she went over her childhood, and always, in everything, was Felipe. Each little pleasure which they had enjoyed together came vividly to her mind,—how they had studied and worked and played; and now — Even the very bobbins on her lace pillow were the work of his skilful fingers, and many of the comforts of their little home had been made or bought by him for her mother or herself.

She could not bear to think of him lying on the rough stones of the wall, but the Captain had promised that the boy soldier should be laid to rest within the convent yard.

“Would that we could do as much for each brave man who gives his life for his country!” the message ran.

The grey dawn had hardly broken before Augustina had crept from her bed and down the stairs, and was hurrying towards her cannon and place on the walls. She was trying to forget her unhappy thoughts in the work which lay before her. The soldier who had taken her place was in worse condition than he had been the evening before, since the chill of the night and the strain of the work were far more than he, with wounds hardly healed, could stand.

“I am shamed to give the place to you,” he said; “yet if I stay longer, I fear that I shall be of no use at all. I will report to the Captain and see that some one is sent here.”

“It will be no use. I shall serve

this gun to-day and every day, as long as God wills, or till we conquer. I promised Felipe, and the Captain said it should be so."

Augustina turned away as if further argument was useless, and so it proved. Each day she took her place beside the gun where Felipe had met his death, and not only worked it with the skill and courage of a man, but inspired others, less stout of heart than she, to hold their places too. Indeed on more than one occasion she held the men in position by her words and her bravery, though, alas! poor Zaragoza had to yield at last to a power stronger than her own.

After sixty days of incredible bravery, after countless repulses and endless suffering, they were overcome. Right beside the great convent of Santa Engracia, near which was the cannon

which was Augustina's charge, the enemy made a breach in the walls. The French soldiers who worked at it were partially protected by the convent, and had wrought the mischief before the Spaniards were fully aware of what had happened. Augustina heard the noise of crumbling masonry at a distance, and ran along the wall in the direction of the sound.

“Ah!” She caught her breath, for there, even as she looked, a score of the hated French were through. On they came, silent at first, leaping through the hole which the workers every moment made larger. They rushed in like a stream swollen by the spring rains, till ten thousand men at least had flowed into the city.

But do not think that these sons and daughters of Aragon gave in even then! Driven from the walls, they

used the housetops and the balconies as vantage grounds. Inch by inch only did they yield, and held off the enemy for twenty-one days longer, only giving in at last because they had actually no more soldiers left to fight. Such bravery and determination impressed even the victorious French, and the terms of capitulation granted were most honourable and generous.

Augustina lived through all these perils and many more, and was among the last to yield. Nor were her courage and her services to her country forgotten; all through Spain her name was known and loved. Nor was her fame confined to her own country, for her daring has been celebrated in many tongues.

She lived full fifty years after her brave exploits on the walls of Zaragoza (she died in 1867), and by com-

mand of the government walked each fine day upon the Prado, her breast covered with medals and decorations, showing the esteem and honour in which she was held.

Ye who shall marvel when you hear her tale,
Oh! had you known her in her softer hour,
Mark'd her black eye that mocks her coal-black
veil,

Heard her light, lively tones in Lady's bower,
Seen her long locks that foil the painter's power,
Her fairy form, with more than female grace,
Scarce would you deem that Zaragoza's tower
Beheld her smile in danger's Gorgon face,
Thin the closed ranks, and lead in Glory's fearful
chase.

CHILDE HAROLD.

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